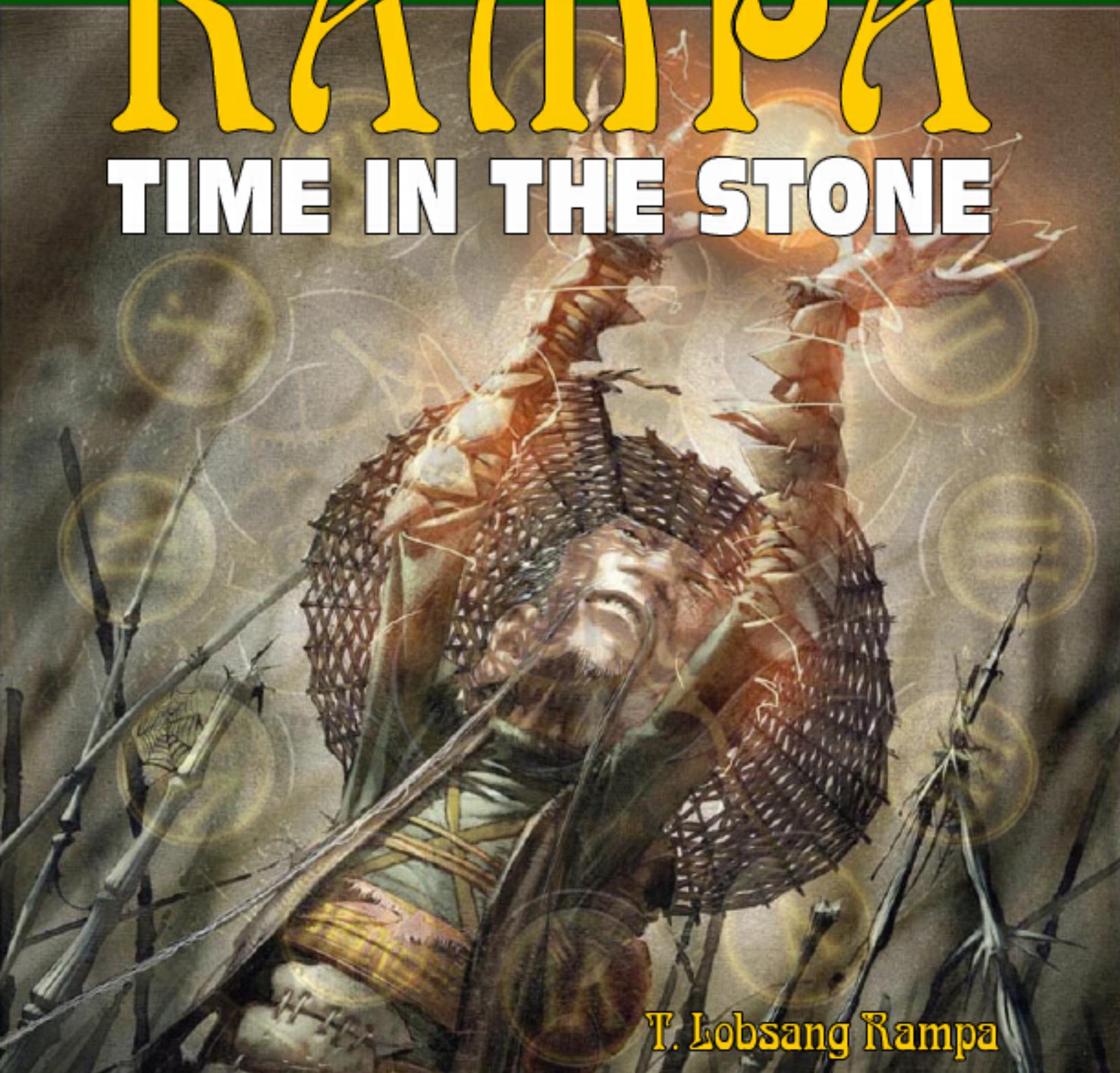


244 Pages

RAMPA

TIME IN THE STONE



T. Lobsang Rampa

With an Introduction by Tim Swartz
Compiled by William Kern



RAMPA: TIME IN THE STONE

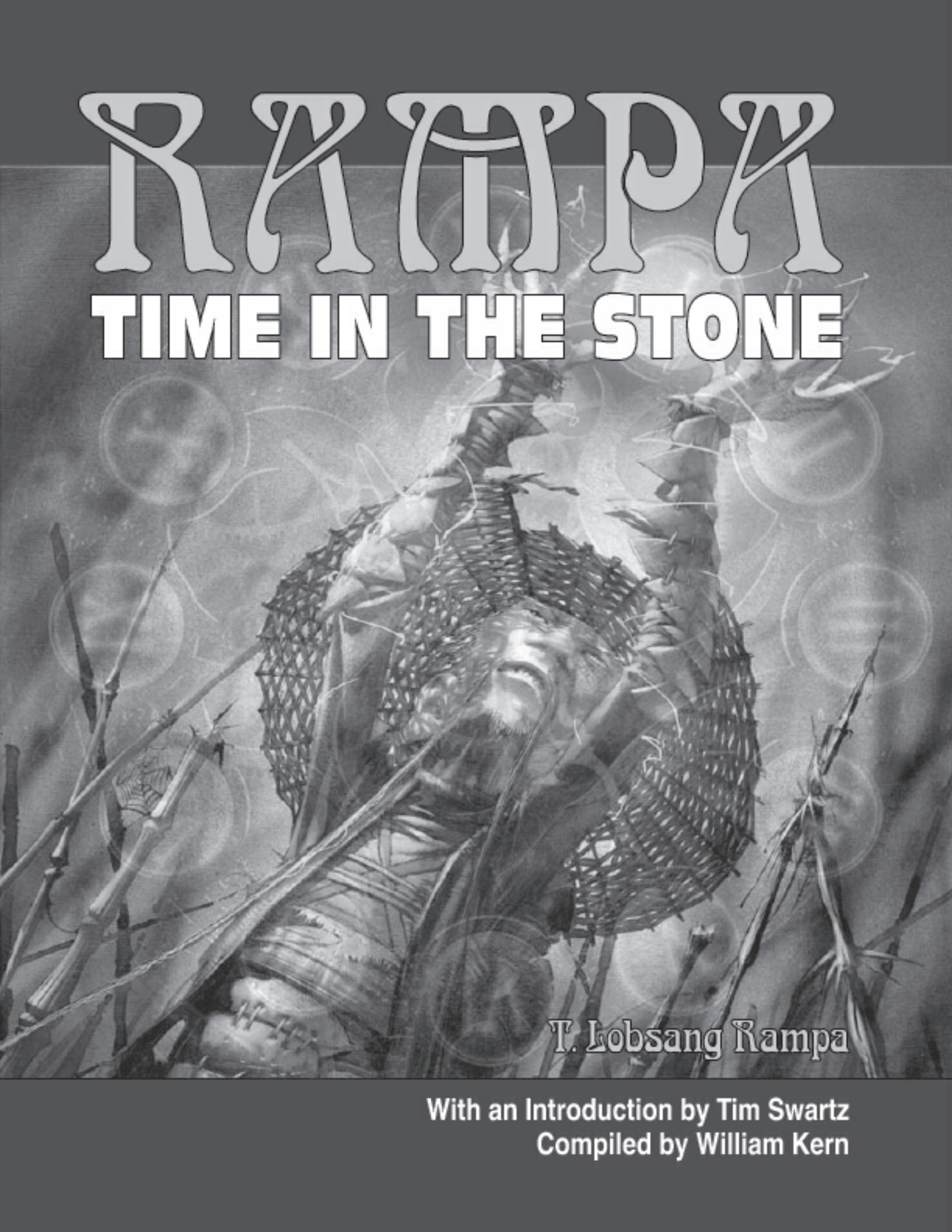


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This new book contains the complete and corrected text of two Rampa books: *The Hermit* and *The Tibetan Sage*.

THE HERMIT. The old hermit kept silent, seemingly gazing into an infinity of pasts through eyeless sockets. Long long years before, as a young lama, he had been set upon by Chinese officials in Lhasa and cruelly blinded for not revealing State secrets which he did not possess. Tortured, maimed and blinded, he had wandered embittered and disillusioned away from the city. Moving by night he walked on, almost insane with pain and shock he avoided human company. Thinking, always thinking.

THE TIBETAN SAGE. "Lobsang! LOBSANG!!" Dimly I seemed to swim up from the depths of a sleep of exhaustion. It had been a terrible day, but now-well, I was being called. Again the voice broke in, "Lobsang!" But I suddenly felt commotion about me, opened my eyes and thought the mountain was falling on top of me. A hand reached out and a quick jerk lifted me from my place of rest and swung me rapidly aside, barely in time, too, because a massive rock with sharp edges slid down behind me and ripped off my robe. Quickly I stumbled to my feet and in a half daze followed him to a little ledge at the far end of which was a very small hermitage.

COMPILER'S NOTE: Two of Rampa's books are contained in this single volume. The texts were carefully proofed to correct a number of scanning and editing errors which have been found in nearly all editions of the books that were republished after the originals went out of print. Duplicated paragraphs, sentences and paragraphs that were misplaced, and spelling errors have been corrected to provide today's interested readers with the most compete and accurate editions of Rampa's books that it is possible to produce.

EXAMINING THE STRANGE WORLD OF DR. T. LOBSANG RAMPA

by Tim Swartz

It was a time when people were questioning their beliefs. Christianity and organized religion seemed stagnant and out of touch with a new generation who were seeking spiritual truths rather than undefined platitudes. People were seeking answers, but no one knew what the question was.

The time was ripe for a new beginning, and from the other side of the world a fresh breeze was blowing that would herald in a new age of understanding for teachings that were thousands of years old, but offered a new hope for those who were looking for ultimate truth.

In 1956 The Third Eye hit the stands with an amazing story that was allegedly the autobiography of a young Tibetan noble, Tuesday Lobsang Rampa, who, at the age of seven was sent to the Chakpori medical lamasery. The Third Eye details Rampa's early life at Chakpori where he was taught the secrets of Tibetan religion and the mystical arts. Rampa's own psychic abilities were helped to develop when he underwent an operation of the third eye, in which a hole was drilled in his forehead. This dangerous procedure opened a closed up part of the brain to the energies of the universe, releasing its potential and enabling it to grow beyond the boundaries of physical reality.

The Third Eye was an almost instant success. In the first year it sold over 60,000 copies and was translated into German, French and Norwegian. Even though skeptics universally panned the book, the public was eager to read about the exotic secrets of Tibet and the ancient ways of Eastern philosophy and religion.

In the 1950s Tibet was in the headlines due to the Chinese invasion of Eastern Tibet in 1949, and their total annexation of the country in 1951. Before that time little was known about the Himalayan country, its people and their beliefs. But as people fled before the Chinese occupation, they brought with them their rich customs which fanned the flames of interest in the West about anything Tibetan.

A WORLD IN TURMOIL

The release of The Third Eye could not have come at a more perfect time. World War Two was still fresh in the minds of Europeans who had borne the brunt of the worst that

humankind could perpetuate upon itself. The Church offered little solace to those who survived and were left to wonder how a God who was supposed to be watching out for the world could allow such horrible things to happen. It seemed as if everything that people had been brought up to believe in, to trust, had let them down. Governments, leaders, the Church, had done nothing to stop the horrors of war, and in fact appeared to embrace the evil with no regard to those who would suffer the most.

People were disillusioned with authority. The Church preached “have faith,” but could really offer no other answers to why the world was as it was. In fact, the Church blamed the victims on why bad things happen. “All men are born with original sin” said the Ministers. “It does not matter how good you are or how many good and unselfish deeds you do; you are born a sinner and will die a sinner.” This is hardly inspirational words to those who are seeking real answers.

The Third Eye, however, revealed a whole new world to those seekers. It offered a spiritual and philosophical system that resonated in a way that Christianity and Western ideals did not. Even more appealing, it offered an easy access point for those Western minds dulled by years of materialism and instant gratification that might not have been able to grasp the intricacies of Eastern mysticism.

The Third Eye allowed a whole new generation to learn that there is more to this world, this universe, than had been taught to them by modern science and traditional Christianity. It started a new movement of understanding that is still with us today. All thanks to one controversial writer.

CONTROVERSY

It was not long before controversy embroiled the Rampa movement. Perhaps due to The Third Eyes popularity, there were those who felt it was their duty to bring down the growing movement before it threatened the Church and possibly political systems. A group of scholars living in Britain were certain that Rampa was a fraud, so they hired a detective by the name of Clifford Burgess to determine the validity of Rampa’s tale. It is now known that this effort was financed by a group representing not only the Church of England, but also high level British Government officials who were worried that interest in Eastern religions would undermine democracy in the Western world.

Clifford Burgess discovered that T. Lobsang Rampa had never been to Tibet, nor had he ever had any operation done to his forehead. Instead Rampa was actually Cyril Henry Hoskins, born in Devon, England, and son of a plumber named Joseph Henry Hopkins.

When the press confronted Hoskins with this revelation, Hoskins freely admitted that he had never “physically” been to Tibet. In reply to his critics, Rampa stated: “The Third Eye is absolutely true and all that I write in that book is fact. I, a Tibetan lama, now occupy what was originally the body of a Western man, and I occupy it to the permanent and total exclusion of the former occupant. He gave his willing consent, being glad to escape from life on this earth in view of my urgent need. One should not place too much credence in ‘experts’ or ‘Tibetan Scholars’ when it is seen how one ‘expert’ contradicts the other, when they cannot agree on what is right and what is wrong, and after all how

many of those ‘Tibetan scholars’ have entered a lamasery at the age of seven, and worked all the way through the life as a Tibetan, and then taken over the body of a Westerner? I HAVE.”

The public, however, continued to believe in Rampa and to buy his books. Rampa’s subsequent books give more details of experiences which he encountered after the period covered by *The Third Eye*. He included stories about Chinese atrocities against Tibetan monks and lamas, ancient civilizations, encounters with the Yeti, gilded mummies of an extraterrestrial super-race, and hidden cities deep within lost caverns. What makes Rampa’s books especially popular is his practical esoteric teachings from which the ordinary person can learn and develop spiritually.

In his later books, Rampa even wrote about UFOs and life on other planets. Two controversial books are *My Visit to Venus*, originally published by Gray Barker, and *My Visit to Agharta*, published by Inner Light Publications. Both of these books have been criticized by Rampa’s followers who are unaware of his interest in UFOs and extraterrestrials. However, those familiar with his later writings are certain that both books were written by him, but were possibly withheld from publication due to their controversial nature. Only by reading the books can the reader make the judgment for themselves.

Truth is, very few of the Rampa books were ever made available in the U.S.; with several exceptions the majority of them were printed and distributed solely in the U.K. where Rampa made his home most of his life. Now deceased for well over two decades his works have been largely ignored by an entirely new generation of metaphysically and occult minded readers. It was only through the foresight of dedicated publishers that a decision was made to bring a few of Rampa’s most controversial works to this “side of the pond” so that open minded readers might tackle the ideas that the lama put forth.

These initial works included, *The Third Eye*, *The Hermit*, *Doctor From Lhasa*, *Feeding The Flame*, *The Rampa Story*, *Living With the Lama* and *Cave of The Ancients*.

In keeping with Rampa’s traditional values and to quell a continued thirst for more of his books, it is time to shed more light onto a darkening world with the release of *TWILIGHT; HIDDEN CHAMBERS BENEATH THE EARTH* in which Rampa reveals the reality of the Inner Earth, a subject few dared to tackle in his lifetime.

Always a provocative topic, Rampa discusses how a belief in the Hollow Earth is part of the Buddhist philosophy beginning with the idea that there is actually a King of the underworld. Publisher William Kern has promised reissue other of Rampa’s earlier works if there is sufficient demand for those books.

“Hopefully,” says the publisher, “the two-in-one books, *Between Two Worlds, World of Illusions, Secrets Of The Ages* and *Time In The Stone* will start a new trend and there will be a clarion call to bring Rampa’s works back into print. Perhaps this will start a new movement of spiritual seekers eager to move away from the world where terrorism, first strike initiatives, end time fanatics, global pollution and rampant materialism has replaced the inner peace and harmony that Rampa saw as our birthright.”

We can say with certainty that Rampa’s works are ageless and his wisdom is needed

now more than ever. He saw a New Age emerging, and perhaps we can still promote his vision of a Brave New World.

COMPILER'S NOTE: Two of Rampa's books are contained in this single volume. The texts were carefully proofed to correct a number of scanning and editing errors which have been found in nearly all editions of the books that were republished after the originals went out of print. Duplicated paragraphs, sentences and paragraphs that were misplaced, and spelling errors have been corrected to provide today's interested readers with the most compete and accurate editions of Rampa's books that it is possible to produce.

We will continue to proof and correct earlier editions of Rampa's books and hope to produce at least 19 of them by the end of 2013.

TIME IN THE STONE

THE HERMIT

CHAPTER ONE

OUTSIDE the sun was shining. Vividly it illumined the trees, threw black shadows behind the jutting rocks, and sent a myriad glinting points from the blue, blue lake. Here, though, in the cool recesses of the old hermit's cave, the light was filtered by overhanging fronds and came greenly, soothingly, to tired eyes strained by exposure to the glaring sun. The young man bowed respectfully to the thin hermit sitting erect on a time-smoothed boulder. 'I have come to you for instruction, Venerable One,' he said in a low voice.

'Be seated,' commanded the elder. The young monk in the brick-red robe bowed again and sat cross-legged on the hard-packed earth a few feet from his senior.

The old hermit kept silent, seemingly gazing into an infinity of pasts through eyeless sockets. Long long years before, as a young lama, he had been set upon by Chinese officials in Lhasa and cruelly blinded for not revealing State secrets which he did not possess. Tortured, maimed and blinded, he had wandered embittered and disillusioned away from the city. Moving by night he walked on, almost insane with pain and shock he avoided human company. Thinking, always thinking.

Climbing ever upwards, living on the sparse grass or any herbs he could find, led to water for drinking by the tinkle of mountain streams, he kept a tenuous hold on the spark of life. Slowly his worst hurts healed, his eyeless sockets no longer dripped. But ever he climbed upwards, away from mankind which tortured insanely and without reason. The air became thin. No longer were there tree branches which could be peeled and eaten for food. No longer could he just reach out and pluck grasses. Now he had to crawl on hands and knees, reeling, stretching, hoping to get enough to stave off the worst pangs of

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starvation.

The air became colder, the bite of the wind keener, but still he plodded on, upwards, ever upwards as if driven by some inner compulsion. Weeks before, at the outset of his journey, he had found a stout branch which he had used as a stave with which to pick his path. Now, his questing stick struck solidly against a barrier and his probing could find no way through it.

The young monk looked intently at the old man. No sign of movement. Was he all right, the young man wondered, and then consoled himself with the thought that the 'Ancient Venerables' lived in the world of the past and never hurried for anyone. He gazed curiously around the bare cave. Bare indeed it was. At one side a yellowed pile of straw - his bed. Close to it a bowl. Over a projecting finger of rock a tattered saffron robe drooped mournfully as if conscious of its sun-bleached state. And nothing more. Nothing.

The ancient man reflected on his past, thought of the pain of being tortured, maimed, and blinded. When HE was as young as the young man sitting before him.

In a frenzy of frustration his staff struck out at the strange barrier before him. Vainly he strove to see through eyeless sockets. At last, exhausted by the intensity of his emotions, he collapsed at the foot of the mysterious barrier. The thin air seeped through his solitary garment, slowly robbing the starved body of heat and life.

Long moments passed. Then came the clatter of shod feet striding across the rocky ground. Muttered words in an incomprehensible tongue, and the limp body was lifted and carried away. There came a metallic clang! and a waiting vulture, feeling cheated of his meal, soared into clumsy flight.

The old man started; all THAT was long ago. Now he had to give instruction to the young fellow before him so like HE had been oh, how many years was it? Sixty? Seventy? Or more? No matter, that was behind, lost in the mists of time. What were the years of a man's life when he knew of the years of the world?

Time seemed to stand still. Even the faint wind which had been rustling through the leaves ceased its whisper. There was an air of almost eerie expectancy as the young monk waited for the old hermit to speak. At last, when the strain was becoming almost unbearable to the younger man, the Venerable One spoke.

'You have been sent to me,' he said, 'because you have a great task in Life and I have to acquaint you with my own knowledge so that you are in some

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measure made aware of your destiny' He faced in the direction of the young monk who squirmed with embarrassment. It was difficult, he thought, dealing with blind people; they 'look' without seeing but one had the feeling that they saw all! A most difficult state of affairs.

The dry, scarce-used voice resumed: 'When I was young I had many experiences, painful experiences. I left our great city of Lhasa and wandered blind in the wilderness. Starving, ill, and unconscious, I was taken I know not where and instructed in preparation for this day. When my knowledge has been passed to you my life's work is ended and I can go in peace to the Heavenly Fields' So saying, a beatific glow suffused the sunken, parchment-like cheeks and he unconsciously twirled his Prayer Wheel the faster.

Outside, the slow shadows crawled across the ground. The wind grew in strength and twisted bone-dry dust into little swirls. Somewhere a bird called an urgent warning. Almost imperceptibly the light of day waned as the shadows grew even longer. In the cave, now decidedly dark, the young monk tightly clasped his body in the hope of staving off the rumbles of increasing hunger. Hunger. Learning and hunger, he thought, they always go together. Hunger and learning. A fleeting smile crossed the hermit's face. 'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'so the information is correct. The Young Man is hungry. The Young Man rattles like an empty drum. My informant told me it would be so. AND provided the cure.' Slowly, painfully, and creaking with age, he rose to his feet and tottered to a so far unseen part of the cave. Reappearing, he handed the young monk a small package. 'From your Honourable Guide', he explained, 'he said it would make your studies the sweeter.'

Sweetcakes, sweetcakes from India as a relief from the eternal barley or tsampa. And a little goats' milk as a change from water and more water. 'No, no!' exclaimed the old hermit as he was invited to partake of the food. 'I appreciate the needs of the young - and especially of one what will be going out into the wide world beyond the mountains. Eat, and enjoy it. I, an unworthy person, try in my humble way to follow the gracious Lord Buddha and live on the metaphorical grain of mustard seed. But you, eat and sleep, for I feel the night is upon us.' So saying he turned and moved into the well-concealed inner portion of the cave.

The young man moved to the mouth of the cave, now a greyish oval against the blackness of the interior. The high mountain peaks were hard black cutouts against the purpling of space beyond. Suddenly there was a growing silvery effulgence of light as the full moon was displayed by the passing of a solitary black cloud, displayed as though the hand of a god had drawn back the curtains of night that laboring mankind should see the 'Queen of the Sky'.

TIME IN THE STONE

But the young monk did not stay long, his repast was meager indeed and would have been wholly unacceptable to a Western youth. Soon he returned to the cave and, scraping a depression in the soft sand for his hip, fell soundly asleep.

The first faint streaks of light found him stirring uneasily. Awakening with a rush he leaped to his feet and gazed guiltily around. At that moment the old hermit walked feebly into the main part of the cave. 'Oh, Venerable One,' exclaimed the young monk nervously, 'I overslept and did not attend the midnight service!' Then he felt foolish as he realized where he was. 'Have no fear, young man,' smiled the hermit, 'we have no services here. Man, when evolved, can have his "service" within himself, anywhere, at any time, without having to be herded and congregate like mindless yaks. But make your tsampa, have your meal, for today I have much to tell you and you must remember all.' So saying, he wandered slowly out into the lightening day.

An hour later the young man was sitting before the elder, listening to a story that was as enthralling as it was strange. A story that was the foundation of all religions, all fairy tales, and all legends upon the World. A story that has been suppressed by power-jealous priests and 'scientists' since the first tribal days.

Probing fingers of the sun filtered gently through the foliage at the mouth of the cave and glinted brightly from the metallic ores embedded in the rock. The air warmed slightly and a faint haze appeared on the surface of the lake. A few birds chattered noisily as they set about their never-ending task of finding enough food in the sparse land. High overhead a solitary vulture soared on a rising current of air, rising and falling with outspread, motionless wings as his sharp sharp eyes stretched the barren terrain in search of the dead or dying. Satisfied that there was nothing for him here he swooped sideways with a cross squawk and set off for more profitable sites.

The old hermit sat erect and motionless, his emaciated figure barely covered by the remnants of the golden robe. 'Golden' no longer, but sunbleached to a wretched tan with yellow bands where the folds had in part diminished the fading by the sunlight. The skin was taut across his high, sharp cheekbones, and of that waxen, whitish pallor so common to the unsighted. His feet were bare and his possessions few indeed, a bowl, a Prayer Wheel, and just a spare robe as tattered as the other. Nothing more, nothing more in the whole world.

The young monk sitting before him pondered the matter. The more a man's spirituality the less his worldly possessions. The great Abbots with their Cloth of Gold, their riches and their ample food, THEY were always fighting for political power and living for the moment while giving lip-service to the Scriptures.

TIME IN THE STONE

'Young man,' the old voice broke in, 'my time is almost at an end. I have to pass on my knowledge to you and then my spirit will be free to go to the Heavenly Fields. You are he who will pass on this knowledge to others, so listen and store the whole within your memory and FAIL NOT.'

'Learn this, study that!' thought the young monk 'life is nothing but hard work now. No kites, no stilts, no-' But the hermit went on, 'You know how I was treated by the Chinese, you know I wandered in the wilderness and came at last to a great wonder. A miracle befell me for an inner compulsion led me until I fell unconscious at the very portals of the Shrine of Wisdom. I will tell you. My knowledge shall be yours even as it was shown to me, for, sightless, I saw all.'

The young monk nodded his head, forgetting that the old man could not see him, then, remembering, he said, 'I am listening, Venerable Master, and I have been trained to remember all.' So saying, he bowed and then sat back, waiting. The old man smiled his satisfaction and continued, 'The first thing I remember was of lying very comfortably on a soft bed. Of course, I was young then, much like you are now, and I thought I had been transported to the Heavenly Fields. But I could not see and I knew that if this had been the other side of Life, sight would have been mine again. So I lay there and waited. Before long very quiet footsteps approached and stopped by my side. I lay still, not knowing what to expect.

"Ah!" said a voice which seemed to be in some way different from our voices. "Ah! So you have regained consciousness. Do you feel well?"

'What a stupid question, I thought, how can I feel well as I am starving to death. Starving? But I no longer felt hungry. I DID feel well, VERY well. Cautiously I moved my fingers, felt my arms and they were not sticks any longer. I had filled out and was normal again except that I still had no eyes. "Yes, yes I DO feel well, thank you for asking," I replied. The Voice said "We would have restored your sight, but your eyes were removed so we could not do so. Rest awhile and we will talk with you in detail."

'I rested; I had no choice. Soon I dropped off to sleep. How long I slept I have no way of knowing, but sweet chimes eventually aroused me, chimes sweeter and more mellow than the finest gongs, better than the most ancient silver bells, more sonorous than temple trumpets. I sat up and stared round as if I could force sight into my eyeless sockets. A gentle arm slid around my shoulders and a voice said, "Rise and come with me. I will lead you."'

The young monk sat fascinated, wondering why things like that did not happen to him, little knowing that eventually they WOULD! 'Please continue,

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Venerable Master, please continue,' he cried. The old hermit smiled his gratification at his listener's interest and went on.

'I was led into what was evidently a large room and in which there were a number of people - I could hear the murmur of their breath and the rustle of their garments. My Guide said, "Sit here," and a strange device was pushed under me. Expecting to sit on the ground as all sensible persons do, I nearly knocked one end through to the other.'

The old hermit paused for a moment and a dry chuckle escaped him as he recalled that bygone scene. 'I felt it carefully,' he continued, 'and it seemed soft yet firm. It was supported on four legs and at the rear there was an obstruction which held my back. At first my conclusion was that they deemed me too weak to sit up unaided, then I detected signs of suppressed amusement, so it appeared that this was the manner of seating for these people. I felt strange and most unsafe sitting up in such a fashion, and I freely confess that I hung on grimly to the padded platform.'

The young monk tried to imagine a sitting platform. Why should there be such things? Why did people have to invent useless items? No, he decided, the ground was good enough for him; safer, no risk of falling, and who was so weak that he had to have his back supported? But the old man was speaking again - his lungs were certainly working well, thought the young man!

' "You wonder about us" the Voice said to me, you wonder who we are, why you feel so well. Sit more easily for we have much to tell you and much to show you."

' "Most Illustrious One," I expostulated, "I am blind, my eyes were removed, yet you say you have much to show me, how can this be?" "Rest at peace," said the Voice, "for all will become clear to you with time and patience" The backs of my legs were beginning to ache, dangling in such a strange position, so I drew them up and tried to sit in the Lotus position on that little wooden platform supported on the four legs and with the strange obstructing thing at the back. So seated I felt more at ease, although there was certainly the fear that, not seeing, I might topple off to I knew not where.

' "We are the Gardeners of the Earth," said the Voice. "We travel in universes putting people and animals on many different worlds. You Earthlings have your legends about us, you refer to us as the Gods of the Sky, you talk of our flaming chariots. Now we are to give you information as to the origin of Life on Earth so that you can pass on the knowledge to one who shall come after and shall go into the world and write of these things, for it is time that people knew the Truth of their Gods before we initiate the second stage."

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“But there is some mistake,” I cried in great dismay, “I am but a poor monk who climbed to this high place I know not why.”

“We, by our science, sent for you,” murmured the Voice, you have been chosen for this because of your exceptional memory which we shall even strengthen. We know all about you and that is why you are here.”

Outside the cave, in the now brilliant light of day, a bird’s note rose sharply and shrilly in sudden alarm. A shriek of avian outrage, and the clucking diminished as the bird fled the spot precipitately. The ancient hermit raised his head a moment and said, ‘It is nothing, probably a high-flying bird scored a hit!’ The young monk found it painful to be distracted from this tale of a by-gone age, an age which, strangely enough, he found not difficult to visualize. By the placid waters of the lake the willows nodded in somnolence disturbed only by vagrant breezes which stirred the leaves and made them mutter in protest at the invasion of their rest. By now the early shafts of sunlight had left the entrance of the cave and here it was cool, with green-tinted light. The old hermit stirred slightly, rearranged his tattered robe and continued.

‘I was frightened, very frightened. What did I know of these Gardeners of the Earth? I was not a gardener. I knew nothing of plants - or universes either. I wanted no part of it. So thinking I put my legs over the edge of the platform-seat and rose to my feet. Gentle but very firm hands pushed me back so that I was again sitting in that foolish manner with my legs hanging straight down and my back pressed against something behind me. “The plant does not dictate to the Gardner,” murmured a voice. “Here you have been brought and here you will learn.”

‘Around me, as I sat dazed but resentful, there commenced a considerable discussion in an unknown tongue. Voices. Voices. Some high and thin as though coming from the throats of dwarfs. Some deep, resonant, sonorous, or like unto the bull of the yak at mating time bellowing forth across a landscape. Whatever they were, I thought, they boded ill for me, a reluctant subject, an unwilling captive. I listened in some awe as the incomprehensible discussion went on. Thin pipings, deep roaring like a trumpet blast in a canyon. What manner of people were these, I wondered, could human throats have such a range of tones, overtones and semitones? Where was I? Perhaps I was worse off than even in the hands of the Chinese. Oh! For sight. For eyes to see that which now was denied me. Would the mystery vanish under the light of sight? But no, as I was to find later, the mystery would deepen. So I sat reluctant and very afraid. The tortures I had undergone in Chinese hands had rather unmanned me, made me feel that I could bear no more, no more at all. Better the Nine Dragons should come and consume me now than that I should have to

TIME IN THE STONE

endure the Unknown. So - I sat, for there was naught else to do.

'Raised voices made me fear for my safety. Had I sight I would have made a desperate effort to escape, but one without eyes is particularly helpless, one is completely at the mercy of others at the mercy of EVERYTHING. The stone that trips, the closed door, the unknown looms ever before one, menacing, oppressive and ever fearsome. The uproar rose to a crescendo. Voices shrilled in the highest registers, voices roared like the booming of fighting bulls. I feared violence, blows which would come to me through my eternal darkness. Tightly I gripped the edge of my seat, then hastily released my hold as it occurred to me that a blow could knock me off with little harm if I gave to it, yet if I held on the impact would be the greater.

'Fear not, said the now-familiar Voice, "this is just a Council Meeting. No harm will come to you. We are just discussing how best to indoctrinate you."

' "Exalted One," I replied in some confusion, "I am surprised indeed to find that such Great Ones bandy words even as the lowest yak herders in our hills!" An amused chuckle greeted my comment. My audience, it appeared, was not ill-pleased with my perhaps foolish forthrightness.

' "Always remember this," he replied, "No matter how high one goes, there is always argument, disagreement. Always one has an opinion which differs from the one held by others. One has to discuss, to argue, and to forcefully uphold one's own opinion or one becomes a mere slave, an automaton, ever-ready to accept the dictates of another. Free discussion is always regarded by the non-comprehending onlooker as the prelude to physical violence." He patted my shoulder reassuringly and continued, "Here we have people from not merely many races, but from many worlds. Some are from your own solar system, some are from galaxies far beyond. Some, to you, would appear as thin dwarfs while others are truly giants of more than six times the stature of the smallest." I heard his footsteps receding as he moved to join the main group.

'Other galaxies? What was all this? What WERE "other galaxies"? Giants, well, like most people I had heard of them in fairy tales. Dwarfs, now some of those had appeared in side shows from time to time. I shook my head, it was all beyond me. He had said that I would not be harmed, that it was merely a discussion. But not even the Indian traders who came to the City of Lhasa made such hootings and trumpetings and roarings. I decided to sit still and await developments. After all, there was nothing else I could do!'

In the cool dimness of the hermit's cave the young monk sat absorbed, enthralled by this tale of strange beings. But not so enthralled that internal rumblings had gone unnoticed. Food, urgent food, that was the important mat-

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ter now. The old hermit suddenly ceased to speak and murmured, 'Yes, we must have a break. Prepare your meal. I will return.' So saying he rose to his feet and slowly moved to his inner recess.

The young monk hurried out into the open. For a moment he stood staring out across the landscape, then made his way to the lakeside where the fine sand, as brown as earth, gleamed invitingly. From the front of his robe he took his wooden bowl and dipped it into the water. A swirl and a flick and it was washed. Taking a little bag of ground barley from his robe he poured a meager amount into the bowl and judiciously poured in lake water from his cupped hand. Gloomily he contemplated the mess. No butter here, no tea either. Ground barley mixed into a stiff paste with water. Food! Into the bowl he dipped his finger and stirred and stirred until the consistency was just right, then, with two fingers from his right hand, he spooned out the mess and slowly and unenthusiastically ate it.

Finished at last, he rinsed the bowl in the lake water and then took a handful of fine sand. Energetically he scoured the bowl inside and out before rinsing it again and returning it - still wet - to the front of his robe. Kneeling on the ground, he spread the lower half of his robe and scooped sand on to it until he could lift no more. Lurching to his feet, he staggered back to the cave. Just inside he dumped the sand and returned to the open for a fallen branch with many small twigs. In the cave he carefully swept the hard-packed sandy earth floor before sprinkling over it a thick layer of fresh sand. One load was not sufficient; seven loads it took before he was satisfied and could sit with a clear conscience on his rolled and tattered yak-wool blanket.

He was no fashion plate for any country. His red robe was his solitary garment. Threadbare and thin in places almost to transparency it was no protection against the bitter winds. No sandals, no underwear. Nothing but the solitary robe which was doffed at night when he rolled himself in his one blanket. Of equipment he had but the bowl, the minute barley bag, and an old and battered Charm Box, long since discarded by another, in which he kept a simple talisman. He did not own a Prayer Wheel. That was for the more affluent; he and others like him had to make do with the public ones in the temples. His skull was shaven and scarred by the Marks of Manhood, burn marks where he had endured the candles of incense burning down on his head to test his devotion meditation wherein he should have been immune to pain and to the smell of burning flesh.

Now, having been chosen for a special task, he had traveled far to the Cave of the Hermit. But the day was wearing on with the Lengthening shadows and the fast chilling of the air. He sat and waited for the appearance of the old

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hermit.

At last there came the shuffling footsteps, the tapping of the Long staff and the stertorous breathing of that ancient man. The young monk gazed at him with new respect; what experiences he had had. What suffering he had endured, How wise he seemed! The old man shuffled round and sat down. On the instant a blood-freezing shout rent the air and an immense and shaggy creature bounded into the cave entrance. The young monk leaped to his feet and prepared to meet his death in trying to protect the old hermit. Grabbing two handfuls of the sandy soil he was about to throw it in the eyes of the intruder when he was stopped and reassured by the voice of the newcomer.

'Greetings, Greetings, Holy Hermit!' he bellowed as if shouting to one a mile away. 'Your blessing I ask, your blessing on the journey, your blessing for the night as we camp by the lakeside. Here,' he bawled, 'I have brought you tea and barley. Your blessing, Holy Hermit. Your blessing.' Jumping into action again, much to the renewed alarm of the young monk, he rushed before the hermit and sprawled in the freshly strewn sand before him. 'Tea, barley, here - take them.' Thrusting out he placed two bags beside the hermit.

'Trader, Trader,' expostulated the hermit mildly, 'you alarm an old and ailing man with your violence. Peace be with you. May the Blessings of Gautama be upon you and dwell within you. May your journey be safe and swift and may your business prosper.'

'And who are you, young gamecock?' boomed the trader.

'Ah!' he exclaimed suddenly, 'my apologies, young holy father, in the gloom of this cave I did not see at first that you are one of the Cloth.'

'And what news have you, Trader?' asked the hermit in his dry and cracked voice.

'What news?' mused the trader. 'The Indian moneylender was beaten up and robbed and when he went crying to the proctors he got beaten up again for calling them foul names. The price of yaks has dropped, the price of butter has gone up. The priests at the Gate are increasing their toll. The Inmost One has journeyed to the Jewel Palace. Oh, Holy hermit, there is no news. Tonight we camp by the lake and tomorrow we continue on our journey to Kalimpong. The weather is good. Buddha has looked after us and the Devils have left us alone. And do you need water carried, or a supply of fresh dry sand for your floor or is this young holy father looking after you well?'

While the shadows traveled far on their journey towards the blackness of night, the hermit and the trader talked and exchanged news of Lhasa, of

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Tibet, and of India far beyond the Himalayas. At last the trader jumped to his feet and peered fearfully at the growing darkness. 'Ow! Young holy father, I cannot go alone in the darkness - DEVILS will get me. Will you lead me back to my camp?' he implored.

'I am under the instruction of the Venerable Hermit,' replied the young man, 'I will go if he will permit. My priestly robe will protect me from the perils of the night.' The old hermit chuckled as he gave the permission. The thin young monk led the way out of the cave. The towering giant of a trader followed, reeking of yak wool and worse. Just by the entrance he chance to brush against a leafy branch. There was a squawk as a frightened bird was dislodged from its perch. The trader uttered a terrified screech - and fell fainting at the feet of the young monk.

'Ow! Young holy father,' sobbed the trader, 'I thought the Devils had got me at last. I almost, but not quite, decided to give back the money I took from the Indian moneylenders. You Saved me, you beat off the Devils. Get me safe to my camp and I will give you a half-brick of tea and a whole bag of tsampa.' This was an offer too good to miss, so the young monk put on a special show by reciting the Prayers to the Dead, the Exhortation to Unrestful spirits, and a Chant to the Guardians of the Way. The resulting uproar - for the young monk was very unmusical - scared away all the creatures who roamed by night whatever it did to any chance devils.

At last they reached the camp fire where others of the trader's party were singing and playing musical instruments while the women were grinding up tea bricks and dropping the results into a bubbling cauldron of water. A whole bag of finely ground barley was stirred in and then one old woman reached a claw-like hand into a bag and withdrew it holding a fistful of yak butter. Into the cauldron it went, another, and yet another until the fat oozed and frothed on the surface.

The glow of the firelight was inviting, the pleasure of the trading party infectious. The young monk folded his robe decorously around him and sedately sat on the ground. An aged crone, with chin almost touching nose, hospitably held out her hand, the young monk self-consciously proffered his bowl and a generous helping of tea and tsampa was ladled in. In the thin mountain air 'boiling' was not a hundred degrees centigrade, nor two hundred and twelve Fahrenheit, but bearable to the mouth. The whole party set-to with gusto and soon there was a procession to the lake waters so that the bowl could be washed and scoured afresh in the fine river sand. The river feeding the lake brought the finest sand from higher in the mountain range, sand which frequently was flecked with gold.

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The party was merry. The stories of the traders many, and their music and songs brought colour to the young man's rather dull existence. But the moon climbed higher, lighting the barren landscape with her silvery glow and casting shadows with stark reality. The sparks from the fire no longer rose in clouds, the flames died low. Reluctantly the young monk rose to his feet and with many bows of thanks accepted the gifts thrust upon him by the trader, who was SURE the young man had saved him from perdition!

At last, laden with little packages, he stumbled along by the lake, to the right through the small grove of willows and on to where the mouth of the cave glowered black and forbidding. He stopped beside the entrance for a moment and looked up at the sky. Far far above, as if approaching the Door of the Gods, a bright flame sailed silently across the sky. A Chariot of the Gods, or what? The young monk wondered briefly, and entered the cave.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE lowing of yaks and excited shouts from men and women roused the young monk. Sleepily rising to his feet he drew his robe around him and made for the entrance to the cave, determined not to miss any excitement. By the lake men were milling, trying to harness yaks which stood in the water and could not be persuaded to come out. At last, losing his patience, a young trader dashed into the water and tripped over a submerged root. Arms aflail he fell face down with a resounding smack. Great gouts of water splashed up and the yaks, now frightened, lumbered ashore. The young trader, covered in slimy mud and looking extremely foolish, scrambled ashore to the hoots of laughter from his friends.

Soon the tents were rolled up, the cooking utensils, well burnished by sand, packed and the whole trading caravan moved slowly off to the monotonous creaking of harness and the shouts of men in vain trying to urge more speed from the ponderous animals. Sadly the young monk stood with hands shading his eyes from the rising sun's glare. Sadly he stood and stared into the distance long after the noise had ceased. Oh why, he thought, could not he have been a trader and travel to far-off places? Why did HE always have to study things which no one else seemed to have to study. HE wanted to be a trader, or a boatman on the Happy River. HE wanted to move round, go places and see things. Little did he know then that he WOULD 'go places and see things' until his body craved peace and his soul ached for rest. Little did he think then that he would wander the face of the earth and suffer unbelievable torments. Now he just wanted to be a trader, or a boatman - anything but what he was. Slowly, with downcast head, he picked up the betwiggled branch and reentered the cave to sweep the floor and strew fresh sand.

The old hermit slowly appeared. Even to the inexperienced gaze of the younger man he was visibly failing. With a gasp he settled himself and croaked, 'My time is approaching, but I cannot leave until I have given you all the knowledge that is mine. Here are special and very potent herbal drops given to me

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by your very famous Guide for just such an occasion; should I collapse, and you fear for my life, force six drops into my mouth and I shall revive. I am forbidden to leave my body until I have finished my task.' He fumbled in his robes and produced a little stone bottle which the younger monk took with the greatest care. 'Now we will continue,' said the old man. 'You can eat when I am tired and have to rest awhile. Now - LISTEN, and take the greatest care to remember. Let not your attention wander for this is worth more than my life and worth more than yours. It is knowledge to be preserved and passed on when the time is ripe.'

After resting for some moments he appeared to regain strength, and a little colour crept back to his cheeks. Settling himself rather more comfortably, he said, 'You will have remembered all I have told you so far. Let us, then, continue. The discussion was prolonged and - in my opinion - very heated, but eventually the babble of conversation ended. There was much shuffling of many feet, then footsteps, small light footsteps like that of a bird tripping along to a grub. Heavy footsteps, ponderous as the lumbering walk of a heavily-laden yak. Footsteps which puzzled me profoundly for some of them seemed to be not made by humans such as I knew. But my thoughts on the matter of footsteps were suddenly ended. A hand grasped me by the arm and a voice said, "Come with us"

'Another hand grasped my other arm and I was led up a path which to my bare feet felt as though it were metal. The blind develop other senses; I sensed that we were traversing some sort of metal tube, although how that could be I could not possibly imagine.'

The old man stopped as though to picture again in his mind that unforgettable experience, then he continued, 'Soon we reached a more spacious area as I could determine by the changed echoes. There was a metallic sliding sound in front of me, and one of the men leading me spoke in a very respectful voice to someone obviously very superior to him. What was said I have no means of knowing, for it was said in a peculiar language, a language of pipings and chirps. In answer to what was evidently an older, I was pushed forward and the metallic substance slid shut with a soft thunk behind me. I stood there feeling the gaze of someone staring hard. There was a rustle of fabric and the creak of what I imagined to be a seat similar to that which had seated me. Then a thin and bony hand took my right hand and led me forward.'

The hermit paused briefly and chuckled. 'Can you imagine my feelings? I was in a living miracle, I knew not what was before me and had to trust without hesitation those who led me. This person at last spoke to me in my own language. "Sit here," he said, at the same time pushing me gently down. I

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gasped with horror and fright, I felt as though falling into a bed of feathers. Then the seat, or whatever it was, gripped me most intimately where I was not used to being gripped. At the sides there were struts, or arms, presumably designed to prevent one from falling off if one slept through the strange softness. The person facing me seemed most amused at my reactions; I could tell from an ill-suppressed laugh, but many people seem to derive amusement from the plight of those who cannot see.

“You feel strange and afraid,” said the voice of the person opposite me. That definitely was an understatement! “Be not alarmed,” he continued, “for you will not be harmed in any way. Our tests show that you have a most eidetic memory, so you are going to have information - which you will never forget - and which you will much later pass on to another who will come your way.” It all seemed mysterious and very frightening in spite of the assurances. I said nothing but sat quietly and waited for the next remarks, which were not long in coming. “You are going to see,” continued the voice, “all the past, the birth of your world, the origin of gods, and why chariots flame across the sky to your great concern.” “Respected Sir!” I exclaimed, “you used the word ‘see’, but my eyes have been removed, I am blind, I have no sight at all.” There was a muttered exclamation indicative of exasperation and the rejoinder with some asperity. “We know all about you, more than you will ever know. Your eyes have been removed, but the optic nerve is still there. With our science we can connect to the optic nerve and you will see what we want you to see.” “Will that mean that I shall permanently have sight again?” I asked.

“No, it will not,” came the reply. “We are using you for a purpose. To permanently give you sight would be to let you loose upon this world with a device far in advance of this world’s science and that is not permitted. Now, enough talk, I will summon my assistants.”

Soon there came a respectful knock followed by the metallic sliding noise. There was a conversation; evidently two people had entered. I felt my seat moving and tried to jump up. To my horror I felt that I was completely restrained. I could not move, not even so much as a finger. Fully conscious I was moved along in this strange seat which appeared to slide easily in any direction. We moved along passageways where the echoes gave me many strange impressions. Eventually there came a sharp turn to the seat and most remarkable odors assailed my twitching nostrils. We stopped at a muttered command and hands grasped me by the legs and under the shoulders. Easily I was lifted straight up, to the side, and down. I was alarmed, terrified would be a more correct word. That terror increased when a tight band was placed around my right arm just above the elbow. The pressure increased so that it felt as though my arm was swelling. Then came a prick to my left ankle and a

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most extraordinary sensation as if something was being slid inside me. A further command was given and at my temples I felt two ice-cold discs. There was a buzz as of a bee droning in the distance, and I felt my consciousness fading away.

'Bright flashes of flame flickered across my vision. Streaks of green, red, purple, all colours. Then I screamed; I had no vision, I must therefore be in the Land of the Devils and they were preparing torments for me. A sharp stab of pain - just a pinprick, really - and my terror subsided. I just did not care any more! A voice spoke to me in my own language, saying, "Be not afraid, we are not going to hurt you. We are now adjusting so that you will see. What colour do you see now?" So I forgot my fear while I said when I saw red, when I saw green, and all other colours. Then I yelled with astonishment; I could see, but that which I could see was so strange that I could scarce comprehend any of it.

'But how does one describe the indescribable? How does one endeavor to picture a scene to another when in one's language there are no words which are appropriate, when there are no concepts which might fit the case? Here in our Tibet we are well provided with words and phrases devoted to gods and devils, but when one comes to dealing with the works of gods or devils, I don't know which, what can one do, what can one say, how can one picture? I can only say that I saw. But my sight was not in the location of my body, and with my sight I could see myself. It was a most unnerving experience, an experience which I never want to repeat: But let me start at the beginning.

'One of the voices had asked me to say when I saw red, to say when I saw green and other colours, and then there was this terrific experience, this white, stupendous flash, and I found that I was gazing, for that is the only word which seems appropriate, at a scene entirely alien to everything I had known. I was reclining, half lying, half sitting, propped up on what seemed to be a metallic platform. It seemed to be supported on one solitary pillar, and I was for a moment very afraid that the whole device would topple over, and me with it. The general atmosphere was of such cleanliness that I had never known. The walls, of some shiny material, were spotless, they were a greenish tinge, very pleasant, very soothing. About this strange room, which was a very large room indeed according to my standards, there were massive pieces of equipment which I just cannot tell you about because there are no words which would in any way convey their strangeness to you.

'But the people in that room - ah, that gave me a stupendous shock, that gave me a shock that almost set me off raving and screaming, and then I thought perhaps this is just a distortion caused by some trick of this artificial vision which they had given - no, lent - to me. There was a man standing by the side of

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some machine. I judged that he was about twice the height of our biggest proctors. I should say he was about fourteen feet high, and he had the most extraordinary conical shaped head, a head which went up almost like the small end of an egg. He was completely hairless, and he was immense. He seemed to be clad in some kind of greenish robe - they were all covered in green cloth, by the way - which reached from his neck right down to his ankles, and, extraordinary thought, covered the arms as far as the wrists. I was horrified to look at the hands and find that there was a sort of skin over them. As I gazed from one to the other, they all had this strange coating on the hands, and I wondered what the religious significance of that could be, or did they think that I was unclean and they might catch something from me?

'My gaze wandered from this giant; there were two whom I should judge by their contours to be female. One was very dark, and one was very light. One had a type of kinky hair, while the other had a straight sort of white hair. But I never have been experienced in the matter of females, and so that is a subject which we should not discuss, nor should it interest you.

'The two females were gazing at me, and then one moved her hand in the direction at which I had not yet looked. There I saw a most extraordinary thing, a dwarf, a gnome, a very very small body, a body like that of a five-year-old child, I thought. But the head, ah, the head was immense, a great dome of a skull, hairless, too, not a trace of hair anywhere in sight on this one. The chin was small, very small indeed, and the mouth was not a mouth the same as we have, but seemed to be more of a triangular orifice. The nose was slight, not a protuberance so much as a ridge. This was obviously the most important person because the others looked with such deferential respect in his, direction.

'But then this female moved her hand again, and a voice from a person whom I had not before noticed spoke in my own language saying, "Look forward, do you see yourself?" With that the speaker came into my range of vision, he seemed to be the most normal, he seemed to be - well, I should say that dressed up he could appear as a trader, perhaps an Indian trader, so you know how normal he was. He walked forward and pointed to some very shiny substance. I gazed at it, at least I suppose I did, but my sight was outside of my body. I had no eyes, so where had they put the thing which was seeing for me? And then I saw, on a little platform attached to this strange metal bench on which I reclined, I saw a form of box. I was on the point of wondering how I could see the thing if it was that with which I was seeing, when it occurred to me that the thing in front, the shiny thing, was some form of reflector; the most normal man moved that reflector slightly, altered its angle or tilt, and then I did shout with horror and consternation because I saw myself lying upon the platform. I had seen myself before my eyes were taken from me. At times when I

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had gone to the water's edge and gone to drink I had seen my reflection in the placid stream, and so I could recognize myself. But here, in this reflecting surface, I saw an emaciated figure looking almost at the point of death. There was a band around an arm, and a band around an ankle. Strange tubes came from those bands to where I saw not. But a tube protruded from a nostril, and that went to some transparent bottle, tied to a metal rod beside me.

'But the head, the head! That I can hardly recollect and stay calm. From the head just above the forehead, protruded a number of pieces of metal with what seemed to be strings coming from those protrusions. The strings led mainly to the box which I had seen on the small metal platform beside me. I imagined that it was an extension of my optic nerve going to that black box, but I looked with increasing horror, and went to tear the things from me, and found I still could not move, I could not move at all, not a finger. I could just lie there and gaze at this strange thing that was happening to me.

'The normal looking man put his hand out towards the black box, and had I been able to move I would have flinched violently. I thought he was poking his fingers in my sight, the illusion was so complete, but instead he moved the box a little and I had a different view. I could see around the back of the platform on which I rested, I could see two other people there. They looked fairly normal; one was white, the other was yellow, as yellow as a Mongolian. They were just standing looking at me, not winking, not taking any notice of me. They seemed rather bored with the whole affair, and I remember thinking then that if they were in my place they certainly would not have been bored. The voice spoke again, saying, "Well, this, for a short time, is your sight. These tubes will feed you, there are other tubes which will drain you and attend to other functions. For the present you will not be able to move for we fear that if we do permit you to move you may, in frenzy, injure yourself. For your own protection you are immobilized. But fear not, no ill will befall you. When we have finished you will be returned to some other part of Tibet with your health improved, and you will be normal except that still you will have no eyes. You will understand that you could not go about carrying this black box." He smiled slightly in my direction, and stepped backwards out of the range of my vision.

'People moved about, checking various things. There were a number of strange circular things like little windows covered with the finest glass. But behind the glass there seemed to be nothing of importance except a little pointer which moved or pointed at certain strange marks. It all meant nothing to me. I gave it a cursory-glance, but it was so completely beyond my comprehension that I dismissed the affair as something beyond my understanding.

'Time passed, and I lay there feeling neither refreshed nor tired, but

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almost in a state of stasis, rather without feeling. Certainly I was not suffering, certainly I was not so worried now. I seemed to feel a subtle change in my body chemistry, and then at the fringe of vision of this black box I saw that one person was turning various protrusions which came from a lot of glass tubings all fitted to a metal frame. As the person turned these protrusions the little things behind the small glass windows made different pointings. The smallest man, whom I had regarded as a dwarf, but who, it seemed, was the one in charge, said something. And then into my range of vision came the one who spoke to me in my own language, telling me that now they would put me to sleep for a time so that I should be refreshed, and when I had had nourishment and sleep they would show me what it was that they had to show me.

'Barely had he finished speaking when my consciousness went again, as though switched off. Later I was to find that that indeed was the case; they had a device whereby instant and harmless unconsciousness could be induced at the flick of a finger.

'How long I slept, or was unconscious, I have no means of knowing, it could have been an hour, or even a day. My waking was as instantaneous as had been my sleeping; one instant I was unconscious, the next instant I was wide awake. To my profound regret my new sight was not in operation. I was as blind as before. Strange sounds assailed my ears, the clink of metal against metal, the tinkle of glass then swift footsteps receding. Came the sliding, metallic sound and all was quiet for a few moments. I lay there thinking, marveling at the strange events which had brought such turmoil to my life. Just as apprehension and anxiety were welling strongly within me, there came a distraction.

'Clacketty footsteps, short and staccato, came to my hearing. Two sets of them accompanied by the distant murmur of voices. The sound increased, and turned into my room. Again the metallic sliding, and the two females, for thus I determined them to be, came towards me still talking in their high nervous tones - both talking at the same time, or so it appeared to me. They stopped one on each side of me, then horror of horrors, they whipped away my solitary covering. There was not a thing I could do about it. Powerless, motionless I lay there at the mercy of these females. Naked, naked as the day when I was born. Naked before the gaze of these unknown women. Me, a monk who knew nothing of women, who (let me confess it freely) was terrified of women.'

The old hermit stopped. The young monk stared at him in horror thinking of the terrible indignity of such an event. Upon the hermit's forehead a film of perspiration bedewed the tight skin as he relived the ghastly time. With shaking hands he reached out for his bowl which contained water. Taking a

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few sips, he set the bowl carefully back beside him.

'But worse was to follow,' he faltered hesitatingly, 'the young females rolled me on my side and forced a tube into an unmentionable portion of my body. Liquid entered me and I felt I would burst. Then, without any ceremony at all I was lifted and a very cold container was placed below my nether regions. I must in modesty refrain from describing what happened next in front of those females. But that was merely a start; they washed my naked body all over and showed a most shameless familiarity with the private parts of the male body. I grew hot all over and was covered with the utmost confusion. Sharp rods of metal were pushed into me and the tube from my nostrils was snatched out and a fresh one forced roughly in. Then a cloth was drawn over me from my neck to below my feet. Still they were not finished; there came a painful tearing at my scalp and many inexplicable things happened before a very sticky, irritating substance was plastered on. All the while the young females chattered away and giggled as though devils had stolen their brains.'

'After much time there came again the metallic slither and heavier footsteps approached, whereat the chatter of the females ceased. The Voice in my own language greeted me; "And how are you now?"'

'"Terrible!" I replied with feeling. "Your females stripped me naked and abused my body in a manner too shocking to credit." He appeared to derive intense amusement from my remarks. In fact, to be quite candid, he HOOTED with laughter which did nothing to soothe my feelings.'

'"We had to have you washed," he said, "we had to have your body cleaned of waste and we had to feed you by the same method. Then the various tubes and electric connections had to be replaced with sterilized ones. The incision in your skull had to be inspected and redressed. There will be only faint scars when you leave here."

The old hermit bent forward towards the young monk. 'See' he said, 'here upon my head there are the five scars.' The young monk rose to his feet and gazed with profound interest at the hermit's skull. Yes, the marks were there, each about two inches long, each still showing as a dead-white depression. How fearsome, the young man thought, to have to undergo such an experience at the hands of females. Involuntarily he shuddered, and sat down abruptly as though fearing an attack from the rear!

The hermit continued, 'I was not mollified by such an assurance, instead, I asked, "But why was I so abused by females? Are there no men if such treatment was imperative?"'

'My captor, for so I regarded him, laughed anew and replied,

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"My dear man, do not be so stupidly prudish. Your nude body - as such - meant nothing to them. Here we all go naked most of the time when we are off duty. The body is the Temple of the Overself and so is pure. Those who are prudish have prurient thoughts. As for the women attending to you, that was their duty, they are nurses and have been trained in such work."

' "But why cannot I move?" I asked, "and why am I not permitted to see? This is TORTURE!"'

' "You cannot move," he said, "because you might pull out the electrodes and injure yourself. Or you might injure our equipment. We are not permitting you to become too accustomed to sight again because when you leave here you will once more be blind and the more you use sight here the more you will forget the senses, tactile senses, which the blind develop. It would be torture if we gave you sight until you left, for then you would be helpless. You are here not for your pleasure, but to hear and see and be a repository of knowledge for another who will come along and who will take that knowledge from you. Normally this knowledge would be written, but we fear to start another of those 'Sacred Book or Writings' furors. From the knowledge you absorb, and later pass on, this WILL be written. In the meantime, remember you are here for our purpose, not yours." '

In the cave all was still; the old hermit paused before saying, 'Let me pause for the nonce. I must rest awhile. You must draw water and clean the cave. Barley has to be ground.'

'Shall I clean your inner cave first, Venerable One?' asked the young monk.

'No, I will do that myself after I have rested, but do you fetch extra sand for me and leave it here.' He rummaged idly in a small recess in one of the stone walls. 'After eating tsampa and nothing but tsampa for more than eighty years,' he said somewhat wistfully, 'I feel a strange longing to taste other food even once before passing on to where I shall not need any.' He shook his white old head and added, 'Probably the shock of different food would kill me.' With that he wandered into his private section of the eave, a section which the young monk had not entered.

The young monk fetched a stout splintered branch from the entrance to the cave, and vigorously set-to to loosen the impacted floor of the cave. Scraping away the hardened surface, he swept the whole mass out into the open and scattered it well away so as not to obstruct the entrance with the discarded material. Wearily he trudged and trudged again and again from lakeside to cave carrying in his upturned robe as much sand as he could lift. Carefully he

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strewed the floor with the fresh sand and stamped it down. Six more trips to the shore and he had enough sand for the old hermit.

At the inner end of the cave was a smooth topped rock with a water-worn depression formed aeons go. Into the depression he ladled two handfuls of barley. The heavy, rounded stone nearby was the obvious tool kept for the purpose. Raising it with some effort the young monk wondered how so ancient a man as the hermit, blind and enfeebled by deprivation, could manage it.

But the barley - already roasted - had to be ground. Bringing the stone down with a resounding THUD he gave it a half-rotation and back before raising the stone for another blow. Monotonously he went on, pounding the barley, rotating the stone to crush the grains finer, scooping the pulverized flour out and replacing it with more grain. THUD! THUD! THUD! At last, with arms and back aching, he was satisfied with the amount. Wiping the rock and stone with sand to remove clinging grain, he carefully put the ground material in the old box kept for that purpose, and moved tiredly to the entrance to the cave.

The late afternoon sun still shone warmly. The young monk lay on a rock and idly stirred his tsampa with a forefinger to mix it. On a branch a small bird perched, head to one side, watching everything with cheeky confidence. From the still waters of the lake a large fish leaped in a successful attempt to catch a low-flying insect. Nearby, at the base of a tree, some rodent was busily burrowing quite oblivious of the presence of the young monk. A cloud obscured the warmth of the sun's rays and the young man shivered at the sudden chill. Jumping to his feet he swilled his bowl clear and polished it with sand. The bird flew off chirping in alarm, and the rodent scurried around the tree trunk and watched events with a bright and beady eye. Stuffing the bowl in the front of his robe, the young monk hurried off to the cave.

In the cave the old hermit was sitting, no longer erect, but with his back against a wall. 'I would like to feel the warmth of a fire upon me once again,' he said, 'for I have not been able to prepare a fire for myself during the past sixty years and more. Will you light one for me and we will sit by the cave mouth?'

'Most certainly,' replied the young monk, 'do you have flint or tinder?'

'No, I have nothing but my bowl, my barley box and my two robes. I do not even possess a blanket.' So the young monk placed his own tattered blanket around the shoulders of the older man, and went out into the open.

A short distance from the cave an old rock fall had littered the ground with debris. Here the young monk carefully selected two round flints which fitted comfortably in his palm. Experimentally he struck them together with a scraping motion and was gratified to obtain a thin stream of sparks at the first

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attempt. Putting the two flints in the front of his robe he made his way to a dead and hollow tree which obviously had been struck by lightning and killed a long time ago. In the hollow interior he probed and scratched and eventually tore off handfuls of white bone-dry wood, rotten and powdery. Carefully he put it inside his robe, then picked up dry and brittle branches which were scattered all around the tree. Laden so that his strength was sorely taxed, he made his slow way back to the cave and thankfully dumped his load by the outer side of the entrance away from the prevailing wind so that later the cave should not be filled with smoke.

In the sandy soil he scooped a shallow depression and with his two flints beside him and the dry sticks broken into lengths he first laid a crisscross of small twigs and covered them with the rotten wood which he rolled and twisted between his hands until it was reduced almost to the consistency of flour. Grimly he bent over, and grasping the two flints, one in each hand, he struck them sideways together so that the poor little stream of sparks should land in the tinder wood. Again and again he tried until at last a minute particle of flame appeared. Lowering himself so that his chest was on the ground, he carefully - oh so carefully - blew towards the precious spark. Slowly it grew brighter. Slowly the minute spot grew until the young man was able to stretch out his hand and place small dry twigs around the area with some bridging the space. He blew and blew and eventually had the satisfaction of seeing actual flame grow and move along the twigs.

No mother devoted more care to her firstborn than the young man devoted to the baby fire. Gradually it grew and became brighter. At last, triumphantly, he placed larger and larger sticks on the fire which began to blaze eagerly. Into the cave he went to the old hermit. 'Venerable One,' the young monk said, 'your fire is ready, may I assist you?' Into the old man's hand he placed a stout staff, and helping him slowly to his feet he put an arm around the thin body and helped him carefully to a place beside the fire and away from the smoke. 'I will go and collect more wood for the night,' said the young monk, 'but first I will place these flints and the tinder in the cave so that they will remain dry.' So saying, he readjusted the blanket around his senior's shoulders, placed water beside him, and took the flints and the tinder into the cave to a place beside the barley box.

Leaving the cave the young monk piled more wood on the fire and made sure the old man was safe from any chance flame, then setting off he headed for the camp site which the traders had used. They might have left some wood, he thought. But no, they had left no wood at all. Better than wood, though, they had overlooked a metal container. Obviously it had fallen unnoticed when the yaks were loaded, or when they were moving off.

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Perhaps another yak had bumped this container free and it had fallen behind a rock. Now, to the young monk, it was treasure indeed. Now water could be heated! A stout spike lay beneath the can, what its purpose was the young monk could not even guess, but it WOULD be useful for something, he was sure. Industriously poking around in the grove of trees, he soon had a very satisfactory pile of wood. Journey after journey he made back to the cave dragging branches, carrying sticks. Not yet did he tell the old hermit of his finds, he wanted to be able to stay then and savour the full pleasure of the old man's satisfaction at having some hot water. Tea he had, for the trader had provided some, yet there had been no means of heating water until now.

The last load of wood was too light, it would have been a wasted journey. 'The young monk wandered around looking for a suitable branch. By a thicket near the water's edge he suddenly saw a pile of old rags. How they got there he could not say. Astonishment gave way to desire. He moved forward to pick up the rags and jumped a foot in the air when they groaned! Bending down he saw that the 'rags' was a man, a man thin beyond belief. Around his neck he wore a cangue, a slab of wood each side of which was about two and a half feet long. It was divided into two halves held together at one side by a hinge, and at the opposite side by a hasp and padlock. The centre of the wood was shaped to fit round the neck of the wearer. The man was a living skeleton.'

The young monk dropped to his knees and pushed aside fronds of the thicket, then rising to his feet he hurried to the water and filled his bowl. Quickly he returned to the fallen man and dripped water into the slightly open mouth. The man stirred and opened his eyes. He sighed with contentment at the sight of the monk bending over him. 'I tried to drink,' he mumbled, 'and fell in. With this board I floated and nearly drowned. I was in the water for days and just recently was able to climb out.' He paused, exhausted. The young monk gave him more water and then water well mixed with barley flour. 'Can you get this thing off?' the man asked. 'If you hit this lock sideways between two stones it will spring open.'

The young monk rose to his feet and went to the lakeside for two substantial stones. Returning, he placed the larger stone beneath one edge of the rock and gave it a hearty THWACK with the other. 'Try the other edge,' said the man, 'and hit it where that pin goes through. Then pull it down HARD.' Carefully the young monk turned the lock edge for edge and gave it a hearty BONK where advised. Pulling it downwards after, he was rewarded by a rusty creak - and the lock came apart. Gently he opened the slab of wood and released the man's neck, which was chafed so deeply that the blood was oozing. 'We will burn this,' said the young monk, 'pity to waste it.'

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CHAPTER THREE

FOR some time the young monk sat on the ground cradling the sick man's head and trying to feed him small amounts of tsampa. At last he stood up and said, 'I shall have to carry you to the cave of the hermit.' So saying, he lifted up the man and managed to get him over one shoulder, face down, and folded like a rolled-up blanket. Staggering under the weight, he made his way out of the little grove of trees and set out upon the stony path to the cave. At last, after what seemed to be an endless journey, he reached the fire side. Gently he allowed the man to slide to the ground. 'Venerable One,' he said, 'I found this man in a thicket beside the lake. He had a cangue around his neck and he is very sick. I removed the cangue and have brought him here.'

With a branch the young monk stirred the fire so that the sparks rose upwards and the air was filled with the pleasant scent of burning wood. Paus-ing only to pile on more wood, he turned back to the old hermit. 'The cangue, eh?' said the latter. 'That means he is a convict, but what is a convict doing here? No matter what he has done, if he is sick we must do what we can. Per-haps the man can speak?'

'Yes, Venerable One,' muttered the man in a weak voice. 'I am too far gone to be helped physically, I need help spiritually so that I may die in peace. May I talk to you?'

'Most certainly,' replied the old hermit. 'Speak, and we will listen.'

The sick man moistened his lips with water passed to him by the young monk, cleared his throat, and said, 'I was a successful silversmith in the City of Lhasa. Business was good, even from the lamaseries came work. Then, oh blights of blights, Indian traders came and made available cheap goods from the bazaars of India. Things they called "mass-produced". Inferior, shoddy. Stuff I would not touch. My business fell off. Money became short. My wife could

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not face adversity so she went to the bed of another. To the bed of a rich trader who had coveted her before I married her. A trader who as yet was not touched by the Indian competitors. I had no one to help me. No one to care. And no one for whom I could care.'

He stopped, overcome by his bitter thoughts. The old hermit and the young monk kept silent, waiting for him to recover. At last he continued: 'Competition increased, there came a man from China bringing even cheaper goods by the yak load. My business ceased. I had nothing but my meager supplies which no one wanted. At last an Indian trader came to me and offered an insultingly low price for my home and all that was in it. I refused, and he jeered at me saying that soon he would have it for nothing. Being hungry and sick at heart, I lost my temper and threw him out of my house. He landed on his head in the roadway and cracked his temple on a chance stone.'

Again the sick man stopped, overcome by his thoughts. Again the others kept silent while they waited for him to continue. 'I was surrounded by throngs,' he went on, 'some blaming me and some speaking out in favour. Soon I was dragged before a magistrate and the tale was told. Some spoke to the magistrate for me, some spoke against me. He deliberated but a short time before sentencing me to wear the cangue for a year. The device was fetched and locked around my neck. With it on I could not feed myself, nor give myself drink, but was always dependent upon the good offices of others. I could not work and had to wander begging for, not merely food, but for someone to feed me. I could not lie down, but had always to stand or sit.'

He turned even paler, and appeared to be at the point of collapse. The young monk said, 'Venerable One, I found a container at the site of the trader camp. I will fetch it and then can make tea.' Rising to his feet he hurried off down the path to where he had left the container, the spike and the cangue. Casting about and delving into the undergrowth springing up around the former camp, he found a hook that evidently belonged to the container. Filling the container with water, after scrubbing it with sand, he set off back along the path, carrying the can of water, hook, spike and cangue. Soon he was back and with great glee tossed the heavy cangue straight on the fire. Sparks shot up and clouds of smoke billowed out, while from the neck-hole in the centre of the cangue a solid column of flame funneled out.

The young monk rushed into the cave and brought out the bundles given him by the trader so recently. Brick tea. A large and very solid cake of yak butter, dusty, quite a bit rancid, but still recognizable as butter. A rare treat, a small sack of brown sugar. Outside, by the fire, he carefully slid a smooth stick through the handle of the can and placed it in the centre of the bright fire.

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Sliding out the stick he placed it carefully to one side. The tea brick was already broken in places so he selected some of the smaller lumps and dropped them in the water which was now beginning to get hot. A quarter of the hard butter was hacked off with the aid of a sharp flat stone. Into the now-bubbling water it went, to melt and spread a thick yellow film over the surface. A small lump of borax, part of a larger lump in the tea bag, went next in order to improve the flavor, and then, oh, wonderful treat, a whole handful of brown sugar.

Seizing a freshly peeled stick the young monk stirred the mess vigorously. Now the whole surface was obscured by steam so he slid the stick under the handle and lifted out the can. The old hermit had been following the proceedings with great interest. By sounds he had been alert to each stage of the matter. Now, without being asked, he held out his bowl. The young monk took it, and skimming the scum of dirt, sticks and froth from the concoction, half filled the old man's bowl before carefully returning it to him. The convict whispered that he had a bowl in his rags. Bringing it out, he was offered a full bowl of tea in the knowledge that he, having sight, would not spill any. The young monk filled his own bowl and sank back to drink it with the sigh of satisfaction that comes to those who have worked hard for anything. For a time all was quiet as each sat engrossed with his own thoughts. From time to time the young monk rose to fill the bowls of his companions or his own.

The evening grew dark, a chill wind sighed through the trees making leaves whisper in protest. The waters of the lake grew, rippled, and waves soughed and sighed among the pebbles of the foreshore. Gently the young monk took the old hermit by the hand and led him back into the now dark interior of the cave, then returned for the sick man. He roused from his sleep as the young monk lifted him. 'I must talk,' he said, 'for there is little life left within me.' The young monk carried him inside the cave and scooped a depression for his hip bone and made a mound for his head. A journey outside to heap sandy soil around the fire to damp it down and keep it asmoulder throughout the night. By the morrow the ashes would still be red and it would be easy to rekindle into vigorous flame.

With the three men, one ancient, one middle aged, and one just approaching manhood, sitting or lying close together, the convict spoke again, 'My time grows short,' he said, 'I feel that my ancestors are ready to greet me and welcome me home. For a year I have suffered and starved. For a year I have wandered from Lhasa to Phari and back seeking food, seeking aid. Seeking. I have seen great lamas who spurned me and others who were kind. I have seen the lowly give to me when they had to go hungry for it. For a year I have wandered even as the most lowly nomad. I have fought with dogs for their scraps - and then found I could not reach my mouth.' He stopped and took a drink of the

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cold tea which stood beside him, now thick with congealed butter.

'But how did you reach us?' asked the old hermit in his quavery voice.

'I bent to the water at the very far end of the lake to drink, and the cangue overbalanced me so that I fell in. A strong wind blew me far across the water so that I saw the night and the day and the night which followed and the day after. Birds perched upon the cangue and tried to peck my eyes, but I shouted and frightened them off. Still I drifted at a fast rate until I lost consciousness and knew no more how long I drifted. Earlier today my feet touched the bottom of the lake and roused me. Overhead a vulture was circling so I struggled and crawled ashore to fall head first into the thicket where the young father found me. I am overtaxed, my strength is gone and soon I shall be in the Heavenly Fields.'

'Rest for the night,' said the old hermit. 'The Spirits of the Night are astir. We must do our astral journeys ere it be too late.' With the aid of his stout staff he climbed to his feet and hobbled to the inner portion of the cave. The young monk gave a little tsampa to the sick man, settled him more comfortably, and then lay down to think over the events of the day and so to fall asleep. The moon rose to her full height and majestically moved to the other side of the sky. The noises of the night changed from hour to hour. Here insects droned and whirred, while from afar came the frightened shriek of a night bird. The mountain range crackled as the rocks cooled and contracted in the night air. Nearby a Rockwell lent thunder to the night as rocks and mountain debris came tumbling down to pound a tattoo on the hard-packed earth. A night rodent called urgently to its mate, and unknown things rustled and murmured in the whispering sands. Gradually the stars paled and the first shafts heralding a new day shot across the sky.

Suddenly, as though electrified, the young monk sat bolt upright. Wide awake he sat, staring vainly, trying to pierce the intense darkness of the cave. Holding his breath he concentrated on listening. No robbers would come here, he thought, everyone knew that the old hermit had nothing. The old hermit; was he ill, the young monk wondered. Rising to his feet he felt a cautious way to the end of the cave. 'Venerable One! Are you all right?' he called.

The sounds of the old man stirring, 'Yes, is it our guest, maybe?' The young monk felt foolish, having completely forgotten the convict. Turning he hurried to where the entrance of the cave showed as a dim grey blur. Yes, the well-protected fire was still alive. Grasping a stick the young monk thrust it into the heart of the red and blew steadily. Flame appeared and he piled more sticks upon the awakening blaze. By now the first stick was well alight at the end. Seizing it, he turned and hurried into the cave.

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The burning brand sent weird shadows dancing crazily on the walls. The young monk jumped as a figure loomed into the feeble torchlight. It was the old hermit. At the young monk's feet the convict lay huddled, legs drawn up to his chest. The torch reflected in his wide-open eyes giving them the impression of winking. The mouth drooped open and a thin line of dried blood wandered from the corners down his cheeks and formed a turgid pool by his ears. Suddenly there came a rattling gurgle and the body twitched spasmodically, heaved up into a taut bow and relaxed with a violent and final exhalation of breath. The body creaked and there was the gurgle of fluids. The limbs became limp and the features flaccid.

The old hermit and the young monk together intoned the Service for the Release of Departing Spirits and gave telepathic directions for his passage to the Heavenly Fields. Outside the cave the light became brighter. Birds began to sing as a fresh day was born, but here there was death.

'You will have to remove the body,' said the old hermit. 'You must dismember it and remove the entrails so that the vultures can ensure a proper air burial.'

'We have no knife, Venerable One,' protested the young monk.

'I have a knife,' replied the hermit, 'I am keeping it that my own death may be properly conducted. Here it is. Do your duty and return the knife to me.'

Reluctantly the young monk picked up the dead body and carried it out of the cave. Near the rockfall there was a large flat slab of stone. With much effort he lifted the body on to the level surface and removed the soiled and tattered rags. High overhead there sounded the beating of heavy wings, the first vultures had appeared at the odour of death. Shuddering, the young monk plunged the point of the knife into the thin abdomen and drew it down. From the gaping wound the intestines came bulging out. Quickly he grasped the slimy coils and pulled them out. On the rock he spread the heart, liver, kidneys and stomach. Hacking and twisting he cut off the arms and legs. With naked body covered with blood he hurried from the dreadful scene and rushed to the lake. Into the water he rushed and scrubbed and scrubbed himself with handfuls of fine wet sand. Carefully he washed the old hermit's knife and scoured it clean with sand.

Now he was shivering with cold and shock. The wind blew icy upon his nude body. The water trickling down felt almost as though the fingers of death were drawing lines upon his shuddering skin. Quickly he leapt out of the water and shook himself like a dog. Running, he drove a little warmth back into his

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body. By the cave mouth he picked up and donned his robe, previously discarded so that it would not be soiled by contact with the dismembered dead. Just as he was about to enter the cave he remembered his task was not completed; slowly he retraced his steps to the stone where vultures still fought over the choicest morsels. The young man was amazed at how little was left of the body. Some vultures sat contentedly on nearby rocks and placidly preened their feathers, others pecked hopefully among the exposed ribs of the corpse. Already they had removed all the skin from the head leaving the skull bare.

Picking up a heavy rock, the young monk brought it down with shattering force on the skeletal skull, cracking it like an eggshell and - as intended - exposing the brains for the ever hungry vultures. Then, grabbing the rags and bowl of the dead man, he rushed back to the fire and tossed rags and bowl into the blazing centre. To one side, still red hot, there lay the metal parts of the cangue, the last and only remnants of what had once been a wealthy craftsman with a wife, houses, and high skills. Pondering the matter, the young monk turned about and entered the cave.

The old hermit was sitting in meditation but roused as his junior approached. 'Man is temporary, Man is frail,' he said, 'Life on Earth is but illusion and the Greater Reality lies beyond. We will break our fast and then continue the transfer of Knowledge, for until I have told you ALL I cannot leave my body and I then want you to do for me what you have just done for our friend the convict. Now, though, let us eat, for we must maintain our strength as best we can. Do you fetch water and heat it. Now with my end so near, I can afford to indulge my body to that small extent.'

The young monk picked up the can and walked out of the cave and down to the lakeside, fastidiously avoiding the place where he had washed off the dead man's blood. Carefully he scoured the can inside and out. Carefully he scoured the old hermit's bowl as well as his own. Filling the can with water he carried it in his left hand and dragged along a very substantial branch with his right. A solitary vulture came swooping down to see what was happening. Landing heavily, it hopped a few steps then flapped into the air again with a shriek of anger at having been fooled. Further up to the left an over-gorged vulture was vainly trying to get into the air. It ran, leaped, and energetically beat the air with flailing wings, but it had eaten too much. Finally giving up, it tucked its head beneath a wing in shame and went to sleep while waiting for Nature to reduce its weight. The young monk chuckled to think that even vultures could eat too much, and he wondered wistfully what it would be like to have even the opportunity of eating too much. He had never had enough, like most monks, he always felt hungry to some degree.

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But the tea had to be made, Time did not stand still. Putting the can in the fire to heat the water, he passed into the cave to get the tea, the butter, borax and sugar. The old hermit sat waiting expectantly.

But - one cannot sit drinking tea for too long when the fires of life are burning low and when an aged man's vitality slowly ebbs. Soon the old hermit settled himself anew while the young monk was tending the fire, the 'Old One's' precious fire after more than sixty years without, years of cold, years of utter self-denial, years of hunger and privation, which only Death could end. Years when the otherwise complete futility of existence as a hermit was softened by the knowledge that there was, after all, a TASK! The young monk came back into the cave smelling of fresh wood smoke. Quickly he seated himself before his senior.

'In that far-off Place so long ago, I was resting on the strange metal platform. The man, my captor was making clear to me that I was there not for my pleasure but for theirs, to be a Repository of Knowledge,' said the old man. 'I said, "but how can I take an intelligent interest if I am merely held captive, an unwilling uncooperative captive who has not the vaguest idea of what it is all about or where he is? How CAN I take an interest when you regard me as less than the dust? I have been handled worse than we handle a dead body which is to be fed to the vultures. We show respect to the dead and to the living; you treat me as excreta which has to be thrown on a field with as little ceremony as possible. And yet you claim to be civilized, whatever that means!"'

'The man was obviously shaken, and not a little impressed by my outburst. I heard him pacing the room. Forward, a scrape of feet as he turned around. Backwards and then forwards again. Suddenly he stopped beside me and said: "I will consult my superior." Rapidly he moved away and obviously picked up some hard object. It went whirr whirr whirr, and then hrrr hrrr.

A sharp metallic click and a staccato sound came from it. Speech, I judged. The man with me spoke at length, making the same sort of peculiar sounds. Clearly there was a discussion which went on for some few minutes. Click, clang, came from the machine, and the man came back to me.

' "First I am going to show you this room," he said, "I am going to tell you about us, what we are, what we are doing, and I am going to attempt to enlist your aid by understanding. First, here is sight."

'Light came to me, sight came to me. A most peculiar sight too; I was looking up at the underside of the man's chin, looking up his nostrils. The sight of the hairs in the nostrils amused me greatly for some reason, and I began to laugh. He bent down and one of his eyes filled the whole of my vision.

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"Oh!" he exclaimed, "someone has tipped up the box." The world whirled about me, my stomach churned and I felt nausea and vertigo. "Oh! Sorry," said the man, "I should have switched off before rotating the box. Never mind, you will feel better in a moment or so. These things happen!"

'Now I could see myself. A horrid experience it was to see my body lying so pale and wan and with so many tubes and attachments coming from it. It was a shock indeed to see myself and see that my eyelids were tight-closed. I was lying on what appeared to be a thin sheet of metal supported on just one pillar. Attached to the pillar foot were a number of pedals, while standing by me was a rod which held glass bottles filled with coloured fluids. These were in some way connected to me.'

The man said, "You are upon an operating table. With these pedals" - he touched them - "we can put you in any desired position." He stepped on one and the table swung around. He touched another and the table tilted until I feared that I might fall. Another, and the table rose until I could see right under it. A most uncanny experience which caused the strangest sensations in my stomach.

'The walls obviously were of metal of a most pleasant green colour. Never before had I seen such fine material, smooth, without blemish and clearly some special form of joining must have been employed for there was no sign even of where walls, floor and ceiling ended or commenced. The walls "flowed", as one might say, into the floor or into the ceiling. No sharp corners, not a single sharp edge. Then a section of the wall slid aside with that metallic rumble I had come to know. A strange head poked through, looked around briefly and as abruptly withdrew. The wall slid shut.'

'On the wall in front of me there was an array of little windows, some of them about the size of a large man's palm. Behind them pointers stood at certain red or black marks. Some larger rectangular windows attracted my interest; an almost mystical blue glow emanated from them. Strange spots of light jiggled and danced in some incomprehensible pattern, while at yet another window a brown-red line wavered up and down in strangely rhythmical forms, almost like the dance of a serpent, I thought. The man - I will call him my Captain - smiled at my interest. "All these instruments indicate YOU," he said, "and here are indicated nine waves from your brain. Nine separate sine waves with the output from your brain electricity superimposed upon them. They show you are of superior mentality. They show you have truly remarkable ability to memorize, hence your suitability for this task."

'Very gently turning the sight-box, he pointed to some strange glass-ware which previously had been beyond my range of vision. "These," he ex-

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plained, "continually feed you through your veins and drain off waste from your blood. These others drain off other waste products from your body. We are now in the process of improving your general health so that you will be fit enough to withstand the undeniable shock of all that we are going to show you. Shock there will be, because no matter that you consider yourself to be an educated priest, compared to us you are the lowest and most ignorant savage, and what to us is commonplace, to you it will be miracles beyond belief almost, and a first introduction to our science causes severe psychic shock. Yet this must be risked and there is a risk although we make every effort to minimize it."

'He laughed, and said, "In your temple services you make much ado about the sounds of the body - oh yes! I know all about your services - but have you **REALLY** heard body sounds? Listen!" Turning, he moved to the wall and pressed a shining white knob. Immediately from a lot of small holes came sounds which I recognized as the body sounds. Smiling, he twisted another knob, and the sounds increased and filled the whole room. Throb, throb, went the heart sounds in such volume that the glassware behind me rattled in sympathy. A touch of the knob again, and the heart sounds went, and there came the gurgle of fluids in the body, but as loud as a mountain stream rushing across a stony bed in its anxiety to get to the sea so very far away. There came the sigh of gases like a storm rushing through leaves and branches of mighty trees. Plops and splashes as though great boulders were being toppled into some deep deep lake. "Your body," he said. "Your body sounds. We know **EVERYTHING** about your body."

' "But, Unhonoured Captor," I said, "THIS is no marvel, THIS is no miracle. We poor ignorant savages here in Tibet can do as well as that. We too can magnify sound, not so vastly, agreed, but we can still do it. We can also release the soul from the body - and bring it back."

' "Can you?" He looked at me with a quizzical expression on his face, and said, "You do not scare easily, eh? You think of us as enemies, as captors, eh?"

' "Sir!" I replied, "you have shown me no friendship yet, you have shown me no reason why I should trust you or cooperate with you. You keep me a paralyzed captive as some wasps keep their captives. There are those among you who appear to me to be devils; we have pictures of such and we revile them as nightmare creatures from some hellish world. Yet here they are consorts of yours "

' "Appearances can be misleading," he replied. "Some of these are the kindest of people. Others, with saintly mien, would stoop to any low act that

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occurred to their perverted minds. Yet you, you - like all savage people, are led astray by the outward appearances of a person."

' "Sir!" was my response, "I have yet to decide upon which side your interests lie, good or evil. If they be good, and I be convinced, then and then only will I cooperate. Otherwise I will use any means I can to circumvent your aims, no matter the cost to me "

' "But surely," was his somewhat cross rejoinder, "you will agree that we saved your life when you were starving and ill?"

' I put on my gloomiest expression as I answered, "Saved my life - for WHAT? I was on my way to the Heavenly Fields, you dragged me back. Nothing you can do now will be so unkind. What is life to a blind man? How can one who is blind study? Food, how shall I get food now? No! There was no kindness in prolonging my life; you even stated before that I am not here for my pleasure but for YOUR purpose. Where is the kindness in that? You have me trussed up here and I have been the sport of your females. Good? And where is all this good you mention?"

' He stood looking at me, hands on his hips. "Yes," he said at last, "from your point we have not been kind, have we? Perhaps I can convince you, though, and then you WILL be useful Indeed." He turned and walked to the wall. This time I saw what he did. He stood facing a square filled with small holes and then pushed a black dot. A light shone above the holed-square and grew into a luminous mist. There, to my stupefaction, a face and head formed in living colours. My captor spoke at length in that strange, outlandish tongue and then stopped.

To my petrified amazement, the head swiveled in my direction, and bushy eyebrows were raised. Then a small grim smile appeared at the corners of the mouth. There was a barked terse sentence, and the light faded. The mist swirled and seemed to be sucked into the wall. My captor turned to me with every sign of satisfaction on his face. "Right, my friend," he said, "you have proved that you are a strong character, a very tough man with whom to deal. Now I have permission to show you that which no other member of your world has seen." He turned to the wall again and stabbed the black spot. The mist formed again with this time the head of a young female.

My captor spoke to her, obviously giving orders. She nodded her head, stared curiously in my direction, and faded away.

' "Now we will have to wait a few moments," said my captor. "I am having a special device brought in and I am going to show you places on your world. Cities of the world. Have you any choice where you would like to see?"

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‘ “I have no knowledge of the world,” I replied. “I have not traveled.”

‘ “Yes, but surely you have heard of SOME city,” he expostulated.

‘ “Well, yes,” was my answer, “I have heard of Kalimpong.”

‘ “Kalimpong, eh? A small Indian border settlement; can’t you think of some better place? How about Berlin, London, Paris, or Cairo? Surely you want to see something better than Kalimpong?”

‘ “But, sir,” I replied, “I have no interest in those places you mentioned. The names convey nothing to me except that I have heard traders discuss such places, but it means nothing to me, nor am I interested. Nor if I saw pictures of these places could I say if it were true or not. If this wonderful contraption of yours can do what you say it can do - then show me Lhasa. Show me Phari. Show me the Western Gate, the Cathedral, the Potala. I know those and will be aware if your device is true or some clever trick”

‘He looked at me with a most peculiar expression on his face; he appeared to be in a state of stupefaction. Then he pulled himself together with a visible jerk and exclaimed: “Taught my business by an unlettered savage, eh? And the fellow is right too. There is something in this native cunning after all. Of COURSE he has to have a frame of reference otherwise he will be not at all impressed. Well! Well!”

‘The sliding panel was abruptly jerked aside and four men appeared guiding a very large box which seemed to be floating on air. The box must have been of considerable weight because although it appeared to float without weight it took much effort to start it moving, or to change its direction, or to stop it. Gradually the box was edged into the room where I lay. For a time I was fearful that they were going to upset my table as they pushed and pulled. One man bumped into the eye box and the resulting gyrations left me for a time sick and dizzy. But at last, after much discussion, the box was placed against a wall directly in line with my sight. Three of the men withdrew and shut the panel behind them.

‘The fourth man and my captor engaged in animated discussion with much waving of hands and gesticulations. At last my captor turned to me and said, “He says that we cannot bring in Lhasa because it is too close, we have to be further away so that we can focus.”

‘I said nothing, took no notice at all, and after a short wait my captor said, “Would you like to see Berlin? Bombay? Calcutta?”

‘My reply was, “No, I would not, they are too far away for me!”

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'He turned back to the other man and a quite acrimonious argument followed. The other man looked as if he wanted to weep; he waved his hands in utter frustration and in desperation dropped to his knees in front of the box. The front slid off and I saw what appeared to be just a large window - and nothing more. Then the man took some bits of metal from his clothing and crawled to the back of the strange box. Strange lights shone in the window, swirls of meaningless colours formed. The picture wavered, flowed, and eddied. There was an instant when shadows formed which MIGHT have been the Potala, but again, it might equally have been smoke.

'The man crawled out from the rear of the bog, mumbled something, and hurried from the room. My captor, looking very displeased, said, "We are so close to Lhasa that we cannot focus. It is like trying to see through a telescope when one is closer than that instrument will focus. It works well at a distance, but close up No telescope will focus. We have the same trouble here. Is that clear to you?"'

' "Sir." I replied, "you talk of things I do not understand. What is this telescope you mention? I have never seen one. You say that Lhasa is too close; I say it is a very long walk for a very long time. How can it be too close?"'

'An agonized expression shone on my captor's face; he clutched his hair and for a moment I thought he would dance on the floor. Then he calmed himself with an effort and said,

"When you had your eyes, did you ever bring something so that your eyes could not focus? THAT is what I mean, WE CANNOT FOCUS AT THIS SHORT RANGE!!!!"

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CHAPTER FOUR

'I LOOKED at him, or at least felt as though I looked at him, because it is a most difficult experience that a man can undergo to have his head in one place and his sight many feet away, coming from a distant place. Anyway, I looked at him and I thought, what marvel can this be? The man says that he can show me cities on the other side of the world yet he cannot show me my own country. So I said to him, "Sir, will you put something in front of the sight box so that I may judge of this matter of focus for myself?"'

'He nodded his head in instant agreement, and cast round for a moment as though wondering what to do. Then he took from the bottom of my table a translucent sheet of something upon which there were very strange markings, markings such as I had never seen before. Obviously it was meant to be writing, but he turned over what appeared to be a few sheets and then he came to something which apparently satisfied him immensely because he gave a pleased smile. He held the thing behind his back as he approached my sight box.

' "Well now my friend!" he exclaimed, "let us see what we can do to convince you." He slid something in front of my sight box, very close it was and to my astonishment all I could see were blurs, nothing was clear. There was a difference, part was a white blur, part was a black blur, but it meant nothing to me, nothing at all. He smiled at my expression - I could not see him smile but I could "hear" him smile; when one is blind one has different senses. I could hear his face and muscles creak, and as he had smiled often before I knew that those creaks meant that he was smiling now.

' "Ah, " he said, "getting home to you at last, am I? Now, watch carefully. Tell me when you can see what this is." Very slowly he pulled the obscuring sheet backwards, gradually it came clear to me, and I saw with considerable astonishment that it was a picture of me. I do not profess to know how this pic-

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ture was produced, but it actually showed me lying on the table looking at the men who were carrying in the black box. My jaw dropped open in profound amazement. I must have looked like a real country yokel, certainly I felt one, I felt the heat rising and my cheeks were burning with embarrassment. There I was, done up with all those things sticking out of me, there I was watching the four men maneuver that box, and the look of astonishment on my face in the picture really did get home to me.

‘ ‘All right,’ said, my captor, ‘obviously you get the point. To drive it home let us go through it again.’’ Slowly he held the picture so that I could see it, and moved it closer to the eye box. Slowly it got unclear until I could see a whitish blackish blur, and nothing more. He whipped it away and then I could see the rest of the room again. He stood back a few paces and said,

‘ ‘You cannot read this, of course, but look. Here are printed words. You can see them clearly?’’

‘ ‘I can see them clearly, sir,’ I responded, ‘I can see them very clearly indeed.’’

‘ So then he brought the thing closer to my eye box and again there was that blurring of vision. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘you will appreciate our problem. We have a machine or device, call it what you will, which is a very much greater counterpart of this eye box we are using on you, but the principle would be utterly beyond you. It is such, however, that we can with it see all around this world but we cannot see anything which is fifty miles away. Fifty miles away is too close just the same as when I brought this a few inches from your eye box you could not see it. I will show you Kalimpong.’’ With that he turned aside and did something to some knobs which were upon the wall.

‘ The lights in the room dimmed, they were not extinguished, but they dimmed so that the light was akin to that which follows immediately the setting of the sun beyond the Himalayas. A cool dimness where the Moon has not yet risen, and where the Sun has not yet withdrawn all its light. He turned to the back of the big box and his hands moved over something that I could not see. Immediately lights glowed in the box. Quite slowly scenery formed. The high peaks of the Himalayas, and upon a trail a caravan of traders. They crossed a little wooden bridge beneath which a rushing torrent threatened to engulf them should they but slip. They reached the other side and they followed a trail through rough pasture land.

‘ For some minutes we watched them, and the view was that which a bird would obtain, a view as though one of the Gods of the Sky were holding the eye box and gently floating across the still barren terrain. My captor moved

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his hands again and there was an absolute blur of motion, something came into sight and went by. My captor moved his hands in the opposite direction, the picture steadied, but - no, it was not a picture, it was the actual thing. This was not a picture, this was reality, this was truth. This was looking down through a hole in the sky.

'Below I saw the houses of Kalimpong, I saw the streets thronged with traders, I saw lamaseries with yellow robed lamas and red robed monks wandering about. It was all very strange. I had some difficulty in locating places because I had been to Kalimpong only once, and that was when a young boy, and I had seen Kalimpong from foot level, from the level of a small boy standing. Now I was seeing it - well, I suppose I was seeing it from the air as the birds see it.

'My captor was watching me intently. He moved certain things and the image or landscape, or whatever one is to call such a marvelous thing, blurred into speed and steadied again.

"Here," said the man, "is the Ganges which, as you know, is the Sacred River of India."

'I knew a lot about the Ganges. Sometimes traders from India would bring magazines with pictures in them. We could not read a single word of writing in those magazines but the pictures - ah! That was different. Here before me, unmistakably, was the actual River Ganges. Then to my quite stupefied surprise it dawned on me that I was hearing as well as seeing. I could hear the Hindus chanting, and then I saw why. They had a body laid out on a terrace by the water's edge and they were sprinkling the body with the Holy Water of the River Ganges before conveying it to the burning ghats.

'The river was crowded, it seemed absolutely amazing that there could be so many people in the world, let alone in a river. Females were disrobing in a most shameless manner on the banks, but so were the men. I felt myself going hot all over at such a display. But then I thought of their Temples, the terraced Temples, the Grottos, and the Colonnades, and I looked and I was amazed. This was reality indeed, and I began to be confused.

'My captor - for I must still remember, he was my captor -my captor, then, moved something and there was a blur of motion. He peered into that window intently, and then the blurring stopped with quite a jerk. "Berlin," he said. Well, I knew Berlin was a city somewhere in the Western world, but all this was so strange that really it didn't convey much to me. I looked down and thought that perhaps it was the novel viewpoint which was distorting everything. Here there were tall buildings, remarkably uniform in size and shape. I

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had never seen so much glass in my life, there were glass windows everywhere. And then on what seemed to be a very hard roadway there were two metal rods set into the road itself. They were shiny and they were absolutely uniform in their distance apart. I just could not understand it.

'Around a corner and into my range of vision walked two horses, one behind the other, and, I hardly expect you to believe this, but they were drawing what appeared to be a metal box on wheels. The horses walked between the metal bars and the wheels of the metal box actually rode along those bars. The box had windows, windows all the way around, and peering in I could see people, people inside the box, people being drawn along. Right in front of my sight (I almost said "right in front of my eyes" so accustomed was I now to this sight box) the device drew to a halt. People got out of the box and others got in. A man went to the front, in front of the first horse, and poked about in the ground with another rod. Then he got back into the metal box and drove off, and the box then turned to the left, off the main set of rods on to another.

'I was so amazed at this that I couldn't look at anything else, I had no time for anything else. Just this strange metal box on wheels carrying people. But then I looked at the sides of the road where there were people. Men were there in remarkably tight clothing. They had garments on their legs which seemed very very narrow, and outlined the exact contours of the legs. And on the head of each man there appeared the most remarkable bowl shaped thing, upside down, and with a narrow rim around it. It caused me some amusement because they did look peculiar, but then I looked at the females.

'I had never seen anything like it. Some of these females were almost uncovered at the top of their body, but the lower part of the body was absolutely wrapped in what seemed to be a black tent. They seemed to have no legs, one could not even see their feet. With one hand they clutched the side of this black tent thing, apparently in an effort to keep the bottom from dragging in the dust.

'I looked some more, I looked at the buildings, and some of those buildings were truly noble edifices. Down the street, a very wide street, came a body of men. They had music coming from the first lot of men. There was much shiny, and I wondered if it was gold and silver instruments they had, but as they came nearer I saw that the instruments were of brass and some were just metal. These were all big men with red faces, and they were all dressed in some martial uniform. I burst out laughing at the strutting way in which they were walking. They were bringing their knees right up so the upper limb was quite horizontal.

'My captor smiled at me and said, "Yes, it's a very strange march indeed

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but that is the German goosestep which the German army use on ceremonial occasions." My captor moved his hands again, once more there was this blurring, once more the things behind the window of the box dissolved into forming mist, then stopped and solidified. "Russia," said my captor, "the Land of the Czars. Moscow."

'I looked, and snow was upon the land. Here, to, they had strange vehicles, vehicles such as I had never imagined. There was a horse harnessed to what appeared to be a large platform fitted with seats. That large platform was raised several inches from the ground by things which looked like flat metal strips. The horse drew this contraption along, and as it moved it left depressions in the snow.

'Everyone was wearing fur and their breath was coming like frozen steam from their mouths and nostrils. They looked quite blue with the cold. But I looked about at some of the buildings, thinking how different they were from the ones I had seen before. They were strange, they were great walls standing up, and beyond the walls rooftops were bulbous, almost like onions upside down with their roots projecting up into the sky. "The Palace of the Czar," said my captor.

'A glint of water caught my sight, and I thought of our own Happy River which I had not seen for so long. "That is the Moscow River," said my captor. "It is a very important river indeed." Upon it there rode strange vessels made of wood and with great sails hanging from poles. There was little wind about so the sails were hanging flaccid, and men had other poles with flattened ends which they moved so that the flat ends dipped in the river, and so propelled the craft.

'But all this - well, I did not see the point of it, so I said to the man, "Sir, I have seen undoubted marvels, no doubt it would interest many, but what is the point of it, what are you trying to prove to me?"

A sudden thought occurred to me. Something had been nagging at the back of my mind for the last several hours, something which now leaped into my consciousness with insistent clarity. "Sir, captor!" I exclaimed. Who are you? Are you God?"

'He looked at me rather pensively as if he were nonplussed by what was obviously an unexpected question. He fingered his chin, ruffled his hair, and shrugged his shoulders slightly. Then he replied, "You would not understand. There are some things which cannot be comprehended unless one has reached a certain stage. Let me answer you by asking you a question. If you were in a lamasery and one of your duties was to look after a herd of yaks, would you answer a yak who asked you what you were?

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'I thought about it, and then I said, "Well, sir, certainly I should not expect a yak to ask me such a question, but if he did ask me such a question I should regard it as proof that he was an intelligent yak, and I should go to some trouble to try to explain to him what I was. You ask me, sir, what I would do about a yak who asked me a question, and I reply to you that I would answer that yak to the best of my ability. In the conditions which you mention I would say that I was a monk and that I had been appointed to look after those yaks, and that I was doing my best for those yaks, and I regarded them as my brothers and my sisters although we were in different forms. I would explain to the yak that we monks believed in reincarnation, I would explain that we each came down to this Earth to do our appointed task and to learn our appointed lessons so that in the Heavenly Fields we could prepare to journey on to even higher things."

' "Well spoken, monk, well spoken," said my captor. "I regret exceedingly that it takes one of the lower orders to give me a sense of perspective. Yes, you are right, you have amazed me greatly, monk, by the perception you have shown and, I must say, by your intransigence because you have been rather firmer than I should be if I should be so unfortunate as to be placed in comparable circumstances."

' I felt bold now, so I said, "You refer to me as one of the lower orders. Before that you referred to me as a savage, uncivilized, uncultured, knowing nothing. You laughed at me when I admitted the truth that I knew nothing of great cities in this world. But, sir, I told you the truth, I told you the truth, I admitted my ignorance, but I am seeking to lighten that ignorance and you are not helping me. I ask you again, sir; you have made me captive entirely against my will, you have engaged in great liberties with my body, the Temple of my Soul, you have indulged in some most remarkable events, apparently designed to impress me. I might be more impressed, sir, if you answered my question, because I know what I want to know. I ask you again - who are you?"

' For some time he just stood there, looking embarrassed. And then he said, "In your terminology there are no words, no concepts which would enable me to explain the position. Before a subject can be discussed a first requisite is that both sides, both parties, shall understand the same terms, shall be able to agree on certain precepts. For the moment let me just tell you that I am one who can be likened to the medical lamas of your Chakpori. I am charged with the responsibility of looking after your physical body and preparing you so that you can be filled with knowledge, when I am satisfied that you are ready to receive that knowledge. Until you are filled with this knowledge, then any discussion on who I am or what I am would be pointless. Just accept for the moment that what we are doing is for the good of others, and that although you

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may be highly incensed at what you consider to be liberties we are taking with you, yet after, when you know our purpose, when you know what we are, and you know what you and your people are, you will change your opinion." With that he switched off my sight and I heard him leave the room. I was again in the dark night of blindness, and again alone with my thoughts.

'The dark night of blindness is a dark night indeed. When I had been blinded, when my eyes had been gouged out, gouged out by the filthy fingers of the Chinese, I had known agony, and even with my eyes removed I had seen, or seemed to see, bright flashes, swirling lights without shape or form. That had subsided throughout subsequent days, but now I had been told that a device had been tapped in to my optic nerve and I could indeed believe it, I had every reason to believe it. My captor had switched off my sight, but an after-memory of it remained. Again I was experiencing that peculiar contradictory sensation of numbness and tingling in the head. It might seem absurd to talk of feeling numb and tingling at the same time, but that is how I felt, and I was left with my numb-tingling, and all the swirling lights.

'For a time I lay there considering all that had happened to me. The thought occurred to me that perhaps I was dead, or mad and all these things were but a figment of a mind leaving the conscious world. My training as a priest came to my rescue. I used age-old discipline to re-orientate my thoughts. I STOPPED REASON and so permitted my Overself to take over. No imagination this, this was the REAL thing; I was being used by Higher Powers for Higher Purposes. My fright and panic subsided. Composure returned to me and for some time I ticked over in my mind in rhythm to the beating of my heart. Could I have behaved differently, I wondered. Had I exercised all caution in my approach to new concepts? Would the Great Thirteenth have acted otherwise if He had been in a similar position? My conscience was clear. My duty was plain. I must continue to act as a good Tibetan Priest and all would be well. Peace suffused me, a feeling of well-being enveloped me like a warm yak-wool blanket protecting against the cold. Somehow, sometime, I drifted off into a dreamless, untroubled sleep.

'The world was shifting. Everything seemed to be rising and falling. A strong sensation of motion and then a metallic CLANG woke me abruptly from my slumber. I was moving, my table was moving. There came the musical chink and tinkle of all the glassware being moved as well. As I remembered, all those things had been attached to the table. Now everything was on the move. Voices surrounded me. High voices, low voices. Discussing me, I feared. But what strange voices, so different from anything I had known. There was movement of my table, but silent movement. No sliding, no grating. Merely a floating. This, I thought, must be how a feather feels when it is blown upon the wind.

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Then the table motion changed direction. Obviously I was being guided down a corridor. Soon we entered what was clearly a large hall. The echoes gave a resonance of distance, considerable distance. A final rather sickening swaying sweep, and my table clanged down upon what my experience told me was a ROCK floor, but how could this be? How could I suddenly be in what my senses told me was a cave? My curiosity was soon set at rest, or was it whetted? I have never been sure.

'There was a continual babble of talk, all in a language quite unknown to me. With the clanging of my metal table upon the rock floor, a hand touched my shoulder and the voice of my captor said, "Now we will give you sight, you should be sufficiently rested by now." There was a scraping and a click. Colours whirled around me, lights flashed, grew dim, and settled down to a pattern. Not a pattern that I understood, not a pattern that conveyed anything to me. I lay there wondering what it was all about. There was an expectant silence. I could FEEL people looking at me. Then a short, sharp, barked question. My captor's footsteps coming swiftly towards me. "Can you not see?" he asked.

' "I see a curious pattern," I replied, "I see that which has no meaning for me, a pattern of wavy lines, of swaying colours and flashing lights. That is all I see." He muttered something and hurried away. There was a muted talk and the sound of metallic objects being touched together. Lights flickered and colours flared. Everything whirled in a mad ecstasy of alien patterns, steadied, and I saw.

'Here was a vast cavern some two hundred or more feet high. Its length and breadth were beyond my computation for they faded into dim darkness far beyond my range of vision. The place was huge and it contained what I could only liken to an amphitheater, the seats of which were filled by - what shall I call them? - creatures which could only have come from a catalogue of gods and devils. Yet strange as these things were, an even stranger object hung poised in the centre of the arena. A globe which I perceived to be the world hung before me, slowly rotating while from afar a light shone upon it as the light from the sun shone upon this Earth.

'There was now a hushed silence. The strange creatures stared at me. I stared back at them although I felt small and wholly insignificant before this mighty throng. Here were small men and women, seemingly perfect in every detail and of godlike mien. Radiating an aura of purity and calm. Others there were who also were manlike but with a curious, quite incredible bird head complete with scales or feathers (I could not at all distinguish which) and with hands which, although human in shape, still had astounding scales and claws. Also there were giants. Immense creatures who loomed like statues and over-

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shadowed their more diminutive companions. These were undeniably human, yet of such size as to overwhelm one's comprehension. Men and women, or male and female. And others who could have been either, or neither. They sat and stared at me until I grew uncomfortable under their steady gaze.

'To one side sat a godlike creature stern visaged and erect. In gorgeous, living colours he sat calmly regal like a god in his heaven. Then he spoke, again in an unknown tongue. My captor hurried forward and bent over me. "I shall put these things in your ears," he said, "and then you will understand every word which is said here. Do not be afraid." He grasped the upper edge of my right ear and pulled it upwards with one hand. With the other he inserted some small device into the ear orifice. Then he leaned over further and did the same to my left ear. He twisted a small knob attached to a box beside my neck and I heard sound. It dawned upon me that I could understand the strange tongue which formerly had been incomprehensible. There was no time to wonder at this marvel, I had perforce to listen to the voices around me, voices which I now understood.

'Voices which I now understood, a language which I now understood. Yes, but the grandeur of the concepts was far above my limited imagination. I was a poor priest from what had been described as "the terrain of savages" and my comprehension was not sufficient to enable me to perceive the meaning of that which I now heard and had thought to be intelligible. My captor observed that I was having difficulties and hastened again towards me. "What is it?" he whispered.

' "I am too ill-educated to understand the meanings of any except the simpler words," I whispered back. "The things which I heard have no meaning at all for me; I cannot COMPREHEND such lofty thoughts." With a very worried expression on his face, he hesitantly walked to a large official - clad in gorgeous clothes - who stood near the Throne of the Great One. There was a whispered conversation, then the two walked slowly towards me.

'I tried to follow the talk going on about me, but succeeded not at all. My captor leaned over me and whispered; "Explain to the Adjutant your difficulty."

' "Adjutant?" I said to him, "I do not even know what the word means." Never before had I felt so inadequate, so ignorant, so utterly frustrated. Never before had I felt so out of my depth. The Adjutant person smiled down at me and said, "Do you understand what I am saying to you?"

' "I do indeed, Sir," was my reply, "but I am utterly ignorant of the whole matter of the Great One's talk. I cannot COMPREHEND the subject, the CONCEPTS are beyond me." He nodded his head and replied: "Our automatic trans-

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lator obviously is to blame, it is not fitted to your metabolism nor to your brain pattern. No matter, the Surgeon-General, whom we believe you refer to as your captor, will deal with the matter and will prepare you for the next session. This is a trifling delay and I will explain it to the Admiral."

'He nodded amiably to me and strode off to the Great One. Admiral? What was an Admiral, I wondered. What was an Adjutant? The terms had no meaning at all for me. I composed myself to await developments. The one referred to as the Adjutant reached the Great One and spoke quietly to him. It all appeared very unhurried, very tranquil. The Great One nodded his head, and the Adjutant beckoned to the one who was called Surgeon-General, or my captor. He went forward, and there was an animated discussion. At last my captor put his right hand to his head in the strange gesture which I had noticed, turned towards me, and walked briskly to me at the same time making motions apparently to someone beyond my range of vision.

'The talk continued. There had been no interruption. A large man was on his feet and I had the impression that he was discussing something about food supplies. A strange female jumped to her feet and made some sort of answer. It appeared to be a strong protest at something which the man had said. Then with face red - with anger? - she sat down abruptly. The man continued unperturbed. My captor reached me and muttered, "You have disgraced me, I SAID you were an ignorant savage." Crossly he wrenched the things from my ears: With a quick sweep of his hand he did something which instantly deprived me of sight again. There was the rising sensation, and I felt my table moving away from that huge cave. Not at all carefully my table and equipment was pushed along a corridor, there came metallic squeaks and clangs, a sudden change of direction, and an unpleasant feeling of falling. With quite a bang my table hit the floor and I guessed that I was again in the metal room from whence I came. Curt voices, the rustle of cloth and the shuffle of feet. The slither of the sliding metal door, and I was left alone again with my thoughts. What was it all about.? WHO was the Admiral? WHAT was the Adjutant? And WHY was my captor called Surgeon-General? What WAS this place? The whole thing was far, far beyond me. I lay there with burning cheeks, feeling hot all over. I was mortified almost beyond endurance that I had comprehended so very very little. Quite definitely I had acted like an ignorant savage - they must have thought as I would have thought if I had regarded a yak as a sentient person and had so addressed him but without result. Perspiration broke out all over me as I contemplated how I had brought shame to my priestly caste by my sheer inability to understand; I felt TERRIBLE!

'There I lay, enmeshed in my misery, prey to the darkest and most ignoble thoughts, full of the deep suspicion that we all were savages to these

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unknown people. I lay there - and sweated.

'The door screeched open and giggling and chattering uproar filled the room. Those unmentionable females again. With great elan they ripped off my single sheet once again leaving me as naked as a newborn baby. Without ceremony I was rolled on to my side, a cold sheet of something clammy was slid under my length, and violently I was rolled back to the other side. There was a sharp YANK as the edge of the sheet was pulled further under me - for a moment I feared that I would be precipitated off the table. Female hands grasped me and urgently scoured me with sharp, stinging solutions. Roughly I was rubbed dry with what felt to be old sacking. The most intimate portions of my body were prodded and poked and strange implements were introduced.

'Time dragged on; I was goaded almost beyond endurance but there was naught that I could do. Most thoroughly had I been immobilized against just such a contingency. But then began such an assault upon me that at first I feared I was being tortured. Females gripped my arms and legs and twisted them and bent them at all angles. Hard hands dug into the muscles of my body and kneaded me as though I were but a mass of dough. Knuckles made depressions in my organs and I was left gasping for air. My legs were wrenched far apart and the unceasingly chattering females drew long woolen sleeves over my feet, up my legs, and near unto my thighs. I was lifted by the back of my neck so that I was bent forward from the waist, some form of garment was thrust around my upper body and appeared to be tied over my chest and abdomen.

'A strange, evil-smelling foam impinged upon my scalp and instantly a rattling buzz sounded. The source of the buzz touched me and made even my teeth rattle - the few I had remaining after the Chinese had knocked most of them out. There was a shearing sensation that reminded me of yaks being shorn of their wool. A rough wipe, so rough that I felt the skin must surely peel, and another form of mist landed upon my defenseless head. The door slithered again, and there came the sound of male voices. One I recognized, that of my captor. He came to me, and using my own language, said, "We are going to expose your brain, there is nothing to worry about. We are going to put electrodes right into your-" The words had no meaning for me except to indicate that I was in for another bad time and that I could do nothing at all about it.

'Strange odours pervaded the air. The chattering females fell silent. All talk ceased. Metal clanged against metal. There came the gurgle of fluids and I felt a sudden sharp prick in my upper left arm. Violently my nose was grasped and some strange tubular device was rammed up my nostrils, and down my throat. Around my skull I felt a succession of sharp pricks which instantly gave

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way to numbness. There came a high-pitched whine and a most horrid machine touched my skull and crawled all around it. It was sawing off the top of my head! The terrible, grinding pulsation penetrated every atom of my being; I had the impression that every bone in my whole body was vibrating in protest. At last, as I could well feel, the whole of the top of my head was cut off with the exception of a small flap of flesh which left my skull hinged at that point. By now I was in a state of terror, a strange form of terror, because although I was terrified, yet I determined that death itself would not make me murmur.

'Indescribable sensations now assailed me. Without any obvious reason I suddenly uttered a long-drawn out, "Ah-hhhahhhahhhh." Then my fingers began violently to twitch. A stinging in my nostrils made it imperative that I sneeze violently - but I could not sneeze. But worse was to follow. Suddenly there stood before me my maternal grandfather. He was clad in the dress of a government official. He was speaking to me with a kind smile on his face. I looked at him - then the impact came to me; I did NOT look at him. I had no eyes! What magic was this? At my amazed exclamation, during which the apparition of my grandfather vanished, my captor moved to my side. "What is it?" he queried. I told him. "Oh, that's NOTHING!" he exclaimed. "We are merely stimulating certain centres of your brain that you may comprehend the more easily. We see that you have ability, but you have been sunk in the sloth and stupor of superstition and will not permit yourself to open your mind. We are doing it for you."

'A female screwed the small ear devices into my ear orifices and for her roughness she might well have been screwing tent pegs into hard soil. There was a click and I could understand the outlandish language. I could COMPREHEND too. Words like cortex, medulla oblongata, psychosomatic, and other terms were now clear to me in their meanings and implications. My basic intelligence quotient was being enhanced - and I knew what it all meant. But it was an ordeal. It was exhausting. Time seemed to stand still. People appeared to walk round endlessly. Their idle chatter was unceasing. The whole affair became entirely boring. I longed to be out and away, out from this place of strange odours, from this place where the top of my head had been cut off like the top of a hard boiled egg. Not that I had ever seen a hard boiled egg, that was for the traders and those who had money, not for poor priests who lived on tsampa.

'From time to time people would address remarks to me, questions, how was I? Did I have pain? Did I think I saw something? What colour did I imagine I saw? My captor stood beside me awhile and told me that various centres were being stimulated and that I should, during the course of the treatment, experience sensation which could frighten me. Frighten me? I had been frightened the whole time, I told him. He laughed at that and casually remarked that as a

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result of the treatment I was now having I should have to live as a solitary hermit the whole of a long life because of the increased perceptions I should have. Never would anyone live with me, he said, until almost at the end of my life a young man would come to take all the knowledge I had and to carry it on and eventually place it before an unbelieving world.

'At last, after what appeared to be an eternity, my bony skull cap was replaced. Strange metal clips were pushed in to join the two halves together. A strip of cloth was wound round and round my head, and all departed save one female who sat beside me. From the rustle of paper it was evident that she was reading instead of paying attention to her duties. There came the soft plop of a book falling and then rhythmic snores from the female. I decided that I too would sleep!'

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CHAPTER FIVE

IN the cave the old hermit suddenly ceased to speak, and placed his hands with fingers outspread on the sandy earth beside him. Lightly those sensitive fingers made contact with the soil. For a moment he concentrated, then said: 'Shortly we shall receive a visitor.' The young monk looked at him in a dumbfounded manner. Visitor? What visitor would be coming here? And how was HE so sure? There had been no sound, no change in the voices of nature beyond the cave. For perhaps ten minutes they sat thus, erect, expectant.

Suddenly the bright-limned oval that was the entrance to the cave dimmed and became a black blur. 'Are you there, Hermit?' yelled a high-pitched voice. 'Faugh! Why do hermits live in such dark and inaccessible places?' Into the cave waddled a short, very fat monk with a sack over his shoulder.

'I've brought you some tea and barley,' he said. 'It was for the Hermitage of Far Beyond, but THEY won't want it anymore and I'm not carrying this lot back.' With a gasp of satisfaction he swung the sack from his shoulder and let it fall to the ground. Like a tired man he sank to the ground too and sat with his back propped up against a wall. How slovenly, thought the young monk, why does he not sit correctly as we do? Then the answer came to him; the other monk was too fat to sit crossed legged with any degree of comfort!

The old hermit spoke mildly, 'Well, what news, Messenger? Is the Great Outside this working?' The Messenger Monk groaned and wheezed; 'I wish you would give me something for this fat,' he said. 'They tell me at Chakpori that I have glandular trouble, but they do not give me anything to make it better.' His eyes, now adjusted to the deep gloom of the cave after leaving the bright sunlight, glanced around. 'Oh! I see you have the Young Man here,' he said, 'I heard he was coming to you. How is he making out? As bright as they say?'

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Without waiting for an answer he went on, 'Rockfall up higher a few days ago. Keeper of the Hermitage at Far Beyond got caught by a boulder and fell over the cliff. Vulture stuffing now, eh?' He went off into peals of laughter at the thought. 'Hermit in the cave died of thirst,' he went on, 'there was only the Keeper and the Perpetual Hermit and he was walled up. No water - no life, eh?'

The young monk sat silent, thinking of the solitary hermits. Strange men who had 'a call' to retire from all and every contact with the world of Man. With a monk volunteer such a 'solitary' would journey up the mountain side and find a hermitage which had been abandoned. Here he would enter an inner room which had no window. His volunteer 'Keeper' would build a wall so that the hermit would never again be able to leave the room. In the wall would be just one small opening large enough to take a bowl. Through this opening, once every two days, would be passed a bowl of water from a nearby mountain spring, and just a handful of grain. Not a single chink of light would ever enter the hermit's room so long as he lived. Never again would he speak or be spoken to. Here, for as long as he lived, he would remain in contemplation, freeing the astral body from the physical and journeying far in the astral planes.

No illness, no change of mind would secure his release. Only death would do that. Outside the sealed room the Keeper would live and have his own existence, always being sure that no sound reached the immured hermit. Should the Keeper fall ill and die, or should he fall over the cliff, then the hermit must die too, usually of thirst. In that very small room, unheated no matter how severe the winter, the hermit would have his being.

A bowl of cold water every two days. Cold water, never warmed, no tea, just the coldest of cold water from the spring which ran direct from the icy mountain slopes. No hot food. One handful of barley every two days. At first the pangs of hunger would be terrible as the stomach shrank. The pangs of thirst would be worse. The body would become dehydrated, almost brittle. Muscles would waste away through lack of food, water, and exercise. The normal body functions would almost cease as less water and less food were taken. But the hermit would never leave the room, all that had to be done, all that Nature COMPELLED him to do, would have to be done in one corner of the room where time and cold would reduce waste to frozen dust.

Sight would go. At first there would be vain strainings against the perpetual blackness. Imagination would in the early stages supply strange 'lights', almost authentic well-lit 'scenes.' The pupils would dilate and the eye-muscles atrophy so that should an avalanche destroy the roof, the sunlight would burn out the hermit's sight as surely as though he had been struck by lightning.

Hearing would become abnormally acute. Imaginary sounds would ap-

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pear to float in to torment the hermit. Snatches of conversation would seem to originate in thin air and be cut off as soon as he attempted to listen. The balance would go next. He would find that he toppled over sideways, or frontways, or backwards. Soon he would hear his approach to a wall. The slightest disturbance of the air by raising an arm would sound as a wind storm. Before long he would hear his heartbeat like a mighty engine throbbing away. There would come the loud gurgling of fluids within the body, the exhalation of organs disgorging their secretions and, as his hearing became even more acute, the faint slithering of muscle tissue on muscle tissue.

The mind would play strange tricks on the body. Erotic pictures would plague the glands. The walls of the black room would seem to crowd in; the hermit would have the strongest sensation of being crushed. Breathing would become hard, labored, as the air became stale. Only every two days was the stone removed from the small gap in the inner wall so that a bowl of water, a handful of barley, and life-giving air could enter. Then it would be blocked up again. When the body was mastered, when all the emotions had been conquered, the astral vehicle would float free like smoke rising from a bonfire. The material body would lie supine on the littered floor and only the Silver Cord would unite the two.

Through the stone walls would pass the astral. Down the precipitous paths it would wander while it savored the joys of being free from the chains of the flesh. Into lamaseries it would creep and telepathic and clairvoyant lamas would converse with it. Neither night nor day, or heat or cold could impede it, nor the stoutest doors provide an obstacle. The council chambers of the world were ever available and there was no sight nor experience which the astral travellers could not witness.

The young monk pondered on these things and then thought of the hermit lying dead in the old hermitage two thousand feet above. The fat monk was talking: 'We shall have to break down the wall and haul him out. I entered the hermitage and went to call at his food door. Faugh! The stench. He was VERY dead indeed. We cannot leave him there. I am away to Drepung to get help. Oh well, the vultures will be glad when we get him out, they LIKE their meat high and they are perching all over the hermitage screeching to get at him. Ah me, I must get on my old horse and chunter along back; I haven't the figure for these mountain jaunts.'

The fat monk waved a hand vaguely in the air and wandered off towards the cave entrance. The young monk rose stiffly to his feet, a leg injury causing him to mutter 'words' beneath his breath. Curiously he followed the departing monk out into the open. A horse was cropping leisurely at the sparse vegeta-

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tion.

The fat monk waddled over to him and with quite an effort got a leg over the horse's back. Slowly they moved off towards the lake where other men on horses were waiting. The young monk stood gazing at them until the whole party moved out of sight. Sighing wistfully he turned and looked up the sheer cliff towering toward the heavens. Far above the walls of the Hermitage Far Beyond gleamed white and red in the sunlight.

For a whole year, in the days of long ago, a hermit and his helper had labored mightily to build the hermitage from the stones scattered around. Levering them into place, cementing stone upon stone, and building an inner room so that no light at all could ever enter the inmost space. For the entire year they labored until they were satisfied with the basic structure.

Then came the making of lemmas from local stones and applying it in a dazzling white coat. Next came the grinding of ochre and mixing it with water from the bounding nearby stream. Painting it on walls which projected over the two thousand foot precipice. Decorating it so that it would be a lasting monument to a man's piety. And all the time the hermit and his helper exchanged not a word. There came the day when the new hermitage was finished and consecrated. The hermit stood looking out over the plain of Lhasa, looking out for the last time over the world of Man. He turned slowly to enter the hermitage - and fell dead at the feet of his helper.

Throughout the years others had been hermit there. Lived there walled into the inner room, died there and been dug out of the stone room and fed to the ever-ready vultures. Now another had died there. Of thirst. Helpless. With helper gone there was no hope, no way to get vital water, nothing to do but to lie down and die. The young monk turned his gaze down from the hermitage, following the path made by the mountain rockfall. Bright grazes down the mountain side. A scar scraped right through the lichen and small scrub and gouged into the rock itself. Down where the mountain flank met the ground there was a fresh pile of rocks. Beneath the rocks a body.

Thoughtfully the young man entered the cave, picked up the can and strode off down to the lake to get fresh water. With the can freshly scoured, and filled with water, he was ready for another task. Peering around, he frowned with dismay. There were no fallen blanches in sight. No more easy-to-reach twigs. He would have to go further afield in search of fuel. Into the copse he wandered. Small animals stopped their never-ending search for food to stand on hind legs and stare curiously at the invader of their domain. Here there was no fear, here animals did not fear Man for here Man lived in harmony, in sympathy, with the animals.

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At last the young monk reached an area where a small tree had fallen. Breaking off the biggest branches that his young strength would permit, he turned again and dragged them one by one back to the entrance of the cave. Fetching the can of water, he soon had tea and tsampa ready once again. The old man sipped gratefully at the hot tea. The young monk was fascinated at his manner of drinking. In Tibet all food containers such as cups and bowls are held with two hands in order that respect may be shown to the food that nourishes. The old hermit, through long practice, held the bowl with two hands so that a finger of each hand overlapped the inner edge. Should there be any danger of spilling, through not being able to see the angle of the liquid, a finger on one side would get wet and so would warn the old man. Now he sat there contentedly, greatly appreciating hot tea after decades of cold water.

'It is strange,' he said, 'that after more than sixty years of sheer austerity, I now crave hot tea. I crave also the warm comforting glow brought by the fire - have you noticed how it warms the air of our cave?'

The young monk looked at him in compassion. Such little desires, so little comfort. 'Do you never get out, Venerable One?' he asked.

'No, never,' replied the hermit. 'Here I know every stone. Here loss of sight does not trouble me greatly, but to venture outside where there are boulders and precipices - THAT is another matter! I could even walk off the bank and fall into the lake; I could leave this cave and be unable to retrace my steps.'

'Venerable One,' said the young monk diffidently, 'how did you get to this remote, inaccessible cave, did you find it by chance?'

'No, I did not,' answered the old man. 'When the Men from Another World finished with me they brought me here. They MADE THIS CAVE SPECIALLY FOR ME!' He sat back with a satisfied smile, well knowing what an effect that would have on his listener. The young monk rocked and almost tipped over backwards, so great was his amazement. 'MADE it for you?' he stuttered, 'but how could they cut such a hole as this in the mountain?'

The old man chuckled with glee. 'Two men brought me here,' he said, 'they brought me on a platform that flew through the air even as the birds fly. It was noiseless - more noiseless than the birds, because they creak; I can hear their pinions squeak as they beat the air. I can hear their feathers as the wind rustles through. THIS thing in which I came was as silent as a shadow. It rose in the air without effort, there was no draft, no sensation of speed. The two men made it alight here.'

'But why HERE, Venerable One?' queried the young monk.

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'Why?' responded the old man. 'Why? Well think of the advantages. It is a few hundred yards off the trade route and so traders come to me for advice or blessings and they pay me by providing barley. It is near the trails leading to two small lamaseries and seven hermitages. I need not starve here. I get news. Lamas call upon me, they know my mission - and they know YOURS!'

'But, Sir,' persisted the young monk, 'surely it made an awful commotion when passersby found a deep cave here where none had been before.'

'Young man,' chortled the hermit; 'YOU have been about here, did you notice any caves between here and By Waters? No? There are no less than nine. You were not interested in caves and so you did not notice them.'

'But how was this cave made by two men, it must have taken months!' The young man was bewildered.

'By the magic of what they called atomic science,' answered the old hermit patiently; 'One man sat on the flying platform and looked about in case there should be onlookers. The other held a small device in his hand, there was a roaring like hungry devils, and - so I was told - all the rock vaporized leaving this as two chambers. In my inner chamber there is a very small trickle of water which fills my bowl twice a day. Ample for my requirements, and it was so arranged as I could not visit the lake for water. If I have no barley - as has happened from time to time, I eat the lichen which grows in the inner cave. It is not pleasant, but it sustains life until I again have barley.' The young monk rose to his feet and walked to the cave wall nearest the light of day. Yes, the rock DID look peculiar, akin to the tunnels of extinct volcanoes he had seen in the Chang Tang highlands. The rock looked as though it had been melted, dripped, and cooled into a glass-hard surface without roughness or projections. The surface seemed transparent and through its clarity could be seen the striations of the natural rock with here and there gleaming veins of gold. At one point, he saw, the gold had melted and had started to flow down the wall as a thick syrup, then it had cooled and had been covered by the glass formed when the silicon dioxide layer had failed to crystallize during that cooling. So the cave had natural glass walls!

But there were household duties to be done; not all time was for talk. The floor had to be cleaned, water fetched, and firewood to be broken into suitable sizes. The young monk seized the sweeping branch and set to without marked enthusiasm. Housework was a bore! Carefully he swept over his sleeping place, carefully he moved toward the entrance, still sweeping. His sweeping branch struck a small mound in the floor, dislodged it, and there uncovered lay a brownish-green object. Crossly the young monk stooped to remove the intruding stone, wondering how THAT got there. He grasped the object

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and jumped back with an exclamation; this was not a stone, this was - what? Cautiously he peered at the thing and prodded it with a stick. It rolled over, chinking. He picked it up and hurried to the old hermit with it. 'Venerable One!' he called, 'I have discovered a strange object beneath where the convict lay.'

The old man stumbled out from his inner chamber. 'Describe it to me,' he commanded.

'Well,' said the young monk, 'it appears to be a bag as large as my two clenched fists. It is of leather or some kind of animal skin.' He fumbled at it. 'And there is a string round its neck. I will get a sharp stone.' He hurried out of the cave and picked up a sharp-edged flint. Returning, he sawed at the thing around the neck of the bag. 'Very tough,' he commented. 'The whole thing is slimy with damp and is covered with mildew, still, ah! I've cut it.' Carefully he opened the bag and tumbled the contents on the skirt of his robe. 'Gold coins,' he said, 'I have never seen money before, only pictures of it. Shiny bits of coloured glass. Wonder what THEY are for? And here are five gold rings with bits of glass stuck in them.'

'Let me feel them,' ordered the hermit. The young monk lifted his robe and guided his superior's hand to the little pile.

'Diamonds,' said the hermit. 'Rubies - I can tell by the vibration - and... .' the old man fell silent as he slowly fingered the stones, the rings and the coins. At last he drew a deep breath and remarked, 'Our convict must have stolen these things, I feel that they are Indian coins. I feel EVIL in them. They are worth a very great sum of money.' He mused in silence for a moment and then said very abruptly, 'Take them, take them and throw them as far as you can into the deepest part of the lake. They will bring ill if we keep them here. There is lust, murder and misery in them. Take them, Quickly!' So saying, he turned and slowly crept back into the inner chamber. The young monk piled the things back in the leather bag and walked out of the cave towards the lake. At the water's edge he spread the things on a flat rock and examined them curiously, then taking a gold coin he held it between finger and thumb and threw it forcefully so that it skipped from wavelet to wavelet until with a final plop it sank beneath the water. Coin after coin followed. Then the rings, and the stones, until none were left.

Rinsing his hands, he turned and smiled with amusement, a large fish-eating bird had flown off with the empty bag and two other birds were following in hot pursuit. Humming a verse from the Chant to the Dead, the young monk turned about and made his way back to the cave - and housework.

But housework does not last for ever. There came the time when the young

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monk could put aside the well-worn twiggy branch which he used as a broom. There came the time when he could look about him appreciatively and see clean sand on the floor, a pile of wood by the low fire, the can full of water and when he could rub his hands together as a sign that HOUSEWORK for the day was finished. Now came the time when young, alert memory cells were ready to receive and store information.

The old hermit came shuffling out of the inner chamber. Even to the inexperienced gaze of the young monk the old man was visibly failing. Slowly the hermit settled himself on the ground and adjusted his lobe around him. The younger man took the proffered bowl and filled it with cold water. Carefully he placed it beside the old one and guided his hand to the edge so that he would know the exact location. Then he too sat on the ground and waited for his senior to speak.

For a time there was no sound as the ancient man sat and marshaled his thoughts in an orderly manner. Then, after much hawking and clearing of his throat, he commenced. 'The female slept, and then I slept. But I did not sleep for long. She was snoring horribly and my head was throbbing. It felt as though my brain was swelling and trying to push off the top of my skull. There came a pounding in the blood vessels of my neck and I felt upon the verge of collapse. There came a change in the tempo of snores, the sound of a foot shuffling, and abruptly, with a remarkable exclamation, the female leaped to her feet and rushed to my side. There came the sound of tinkles and clinks and a different rhythm in the rushing of the fluids circling within me. In a moment or two the pulsing in my brain ceased. The pressure in my neck ended and the cut bone edges jarred and thrummed no longer.'

'The female bustled about moving things, making glass clink against glass and metal against metal. I heard her creak as she bent to pick up the fallen book. Some article of furniture squealed as it was pushed along the floor to a new position. Then she moved to the wall and I heard the slither and slight clang as the door was slid shut behind her. There came the sound of her footsteps diminishing down the corridor. I lay there and thought of all that had happened to me. I HAD to lie there, because I could not move! Definitely something had been done to my brain; I was more alert. I could think more clearly. Previously there had been many woolly thoughts which, because I had been unable to bring them into sharp focus, I had pushed to somewhere in the obscure background of my mind. Now, ALL thoughts were as clear as the waters of a mountain stream.'

'I remembered being born. My first sight of the world into which I had then been precipitated. The face of my mother. The wizened face of the old

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woman helping at the birth. Later, my father handling me, the newborn baby, as though he were afraid of me - the first newborn baby he had seen. I remembered his alarmed expression and his concern at the sight of such a red and wrinkled face. Then scenes of early childhood came to me. Always it had been my parents' desire to have a son who would become a priest and bring honour to the family. School, and a whole crowd of us sitting upon the floor practising writing upon slabs of slate. The monk-teacher going from one to another giving praise or reprimands and to me saying that as I did well I should stay longer so that I might learn more than my companions.

'My memory was complete. I could recall with ease pictures which had appeared in magazines brought by the Indian traders, and pictures which I did not even know that I had seen. But memory is a two-edged instrument; I recalled in all detail torture at the hands of the Chinese. Because I had been seen carrying papers from the Potala the Chinese had assumed that they were State secrets and so had kidnapped me and tortured me to make me reveal them. Me, just a humble priest whose most secret knowledge was of how much the lamas ate!

'The door slid open with metallic sibilance. Immersed in my thoughts I had not noticed approaching footsteps along the corridor. A voice asked, "How are you now?" and I felt my captor standing by my side. As he spoke he busied himself with the strange applets to which I was connected. "How are you now?" he asked again.

'"Fair," I replied, "but unhappy at all the strange things which have happened to me. I feel like a sick yak in the market square!" He laughed and turned away to a far side of the room. I could hear the rustle of paper, the unmistakable sound of pages being turned.

'"Sir!" I said, 'what is an Admiral? I am greatly puzzled. And what is an Adjutant?"

'He set down a heavy book, or at least it sounded like a book, and came over to me. "Yes," he replied, with compassion in his voice, "I suppose from your point of view we HAVE treated you rather badly." He moved, and I heard him draw up one of those strange metal seats. As he sat upon it it creaked alarmingly.

'"An Admiral," he said amusingly. "Well, it is quite an explanation and one which you will have later, but let us assuage your immediate curiosity. You are on a vessel which travels through space, the SEA of space we call it, because at the speed at which we travel the sparse matter in space is encountered so rapidly that it feels like a sea of water. Do you follow?" he asked.

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'I thought about it and - yes - I followed by thinking of our Happy River and the skin boats which traversed it. "Yes, I do," I responded. "Well then," he continued, "our ship is one of a group. This is the most important of them. Each ship - including this - has a captain, but an Admiral is, let us say, a captain of all the captains. Our term for that is 'Admiral'. Now, in addition to our space sailors, we have soldiers aboard and it is usual to have a very senior soldier-officer to act as 'assistant' to the Admiral. We call such an assistant an Adjutant. To refer it to your own terms, an abbot has a chaplain, one who does all the general work while leaving the great decisions to his senior."

'That was clear enough for me; I was just pondering the matter when my captor bent lower and WHISPERED: "And PLEASE do not refer to me so much as your CAPTOR. I am the senior surgeon of this ship. Again, in your own terms of reference - I am akin to the senior medical lama of Chakpori. You call me Doctor, not Captor!" It really amused me to know that even such great men had their foibles. A man such as he being distressed that an ignorant savage (as he had termed me) called him "Captor". I resolved to humour him, so I replied meekly,

"Yes, Doctor." My reward was that of a most gratified look and a pleasant nod of his head.

'For some time he was intent upon certain instruments which appeared to be connected to my head. Many adjustments were made, fluid flows varied, and strange things which left a tingling to my scalp. After some time he said, "You will rest for three days. By that time the bones will have knit and forced-healing will be well under way. Then, provided you are as well as we hope, we shall take you back to the Council Chamber and show you many things. I do not know if the Admiral will want to speak to you, if he does, fear not. Just speak to him as you would to me." As an afterthought, he added, ruefully, "Or rather more politely!" He gave me a light pat on the shoulder, and left the room.

'I lay there, immobile, thinking of my future. Future? What future was there for a blind man? What should I do if I ever left this place alive, or did I even WANT to leave alive? Should I have to beg for my living like the beggars who swarmed at the Western Gate? Most of them were fakes, anyway. I wondered where I would live, where I should obtain food. Ours was a hard climate and was no place for a man who had no home -nowhere to rest his head. I worried and exhausted by all the events and the worries, I fell into a fitful sleep. From time to time I sensed the sliding door open and the presence of people who came maybe to see that I was yet alive. Clicks and tinkles failed to more than rouse me from the threshold of sleep. There was no way in which I could compute the passage of time. In normal conditions we used our heartbeats to

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mark the elapsing of minutes, but this was hours, and hours during which I was not conscious.

'After what seemed to be a long interval, during which I appeared to hover between the world of material and spirit, I was rudely roused to a state of quick awareness. Those fearful females had again descended upon me like vultures upon a corpse. Their giggling chatter offended me. Their lewd liberties with my defenseless body offended me more. Yet I could not speak their language, I could not even move. A marvel it was to me that females such as these, members of the so-called weaker sex, could have such hard hands and harder emotions. I was emaciated, frail, and in remarkably poor condition, yet these females moved me around as callously as though I were a block of stone. Lotions were daubed upon me, foul smelling unguents were rubbed into my shrinking skin, and tubes were snatched from my nostrils and other locations and were as roughly replaced. I shuddered in spirit and wondered anew what devilish stroke of fate had decreed that I should endure such humiliations. . . .

'With the departure of the offensive females peace came upon me for but a short time. Then the door slid open again and my captor, no, I must remember to say, "the doctor", entered and closed the door after him. "Good morning, you are awake, I see," he said pleasantly.

' "Yes, Sir Doctor," I replied somewhat grumpily, "there is no possibility of sleep when those chattering females descend upon me like a plague!" That seemed to amuse him greatly. By now, presumably because he was beginning to know me better, he was treating me more like a human, although a half-witted human. "We have to use those nurses," he said, "so that you will be looked after, kept clean, and smelling sweetly beautiful. You have been powdered, perfumed, and prepared for another day of rest."

'Rest! REST! I wanted no rest, I wanted to get out. But where was there for me to go? As the doctor stood there examining the site of the operation on my skull, I thought anew of all that he had told me, when was it? Yesterday? Or the day before that? I did not know. I DID know that one thing puzzled me very greatly. "Sir Doctor," I said, "you told me that I was on a vessel of space. Is my understanding correct?"'

' "Of course it is," he replied. "You are aboard the flagship of this supervisory fleet. Now we are resting upon a mountainous plateau in the Highlands of Tibet. Why?"'

"Sir!" I answered, "when I was in that chamber before all those astonishing people, I saw that we were in a vast STONE chamber; how can a STONE chamber be on this vessel?"

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'He laughed as though I had made the greatest joke. Recovering, he said, amid chuckles, "You are alert, very alert. And you are correct. This rocky plateau upon which this vessel rests was formerly a volcano. There are deep passages and immense chambers through which, in ages long gone, molten lava flowed and spewed forth. We use those passages, and we have increased the volume of those chambers for our own purposes. We use this site extensively - different ships use it from time to time. You were taken from the ship and into a rock chamber."

"Taken from the ship into a rock chamber! That accounted for the strange impression I had received, an impression of leaving a metal corridor for a rock chamber. "Sir Doctor," I exclaimed, "I know of tunnels and rock chambers; there is a large concealed chamber within Potala Mountain, it has a lake as well."

"Yes," he remarked, "our geophysical photographs have shown it to us. We did not know that you Tibetans had discovered it, though!" He went on with his fiddling - I was very aware that he was making changes to the fluids coursing through the tubes and into my body. An alteration in my body temperature became apparent and without my conscious volition my breathing became slower and deeper; I was being manipulated like a puppet in the market place.

"Sir Doctor!" I remarked eagerly, "your vessels of space are known to us, we term them The Chariots of the Gods. Why do you not make contact with our leaders? Why do you not declare your presence openly? Why do you have surreptitiously to abduct such as I?"

"There was a sharp indrawing of breath and a pause before he finally replied, "Well, ah, er, I mean to say," he stammered, "if I tell you the reason it will merely evoke in you those most caustic remarks which are good for neither of us."

"No, Sir Doctor," I replied, "I am your prisoner even as I was the prisoner of the Chinese, I cannot afford to provoke you. I am trying in my uncivilized way to understand things - which presumably is also your desire."

'He shuffled around with his feet and clearly was deciding what was best to do. Coming to a decision, he said, "We are the Gardeners of the Earth, and, of course, of many other inhabited worlds. A gardener does not discuss his identity or plans with his flowers. Or, to elevate matters a little, if a yak-herder finds a yak who appears brighter than average the herder still does not go up to him and command, 'take me to your Leader.' Nor does the herder discuss with the intelligent yak matters which clearly are beyond the yak's compreh-

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hension. It is not our policy to fraternize with the natives of any of the worlds we supervise. We did that in eons past and it brought disaster to all and gave rise to fantastic legends in your own world."

'I sniffed in anger and disdain; 'First you say I am an uncivilized savage, and now you call me, or liken me, to a yak.' I expostulated. "Then if I am so low - WHY DO YOU KEEP ME PRISONER HERE?" His reply was sharp: "Because we are making use of you. Because you have a fantastic memory which we are increasing. Because you are going merely to be a repository of knowledge for one who will come to you almost at the end of your life. Now sleep!" I heard, or sensed, a click, and then a wave of black unconsciousness fell softly upon me.

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CHAPTER SIX

'THE endless hours dragged wearily by. I lay in a stupor, a daze in which reality was not and in which the past, the present, and the future were rolled into one. My past life, my impotent state wherein I could neither move nor see, and my dreadful fear for my future after I got out of "here" - if indeed I did. From time to time females came and did quite amazing things to me. My limbs were twisted and flexed, my head was rotated and all portions of my anatomy were squeezed, pinched, pummeled and kneaded. From time to time groups of men came in and stood around me while they discussed me. I could not understand them, of course, but the inference was clear, Then too, they would stick things in me but I denied them the satisfaction of seeing me wince at the sharp prick. I drifted, drifted.

"There came the time when I was alert once more. I had been drowsing, somnolent as for unknown hours before. Although aware of the sliding open of the door of the room, I was not disturbed by it. I was withdrawn, feeling as though embedded in layers of wool and not caring what happened to anyone, not even to myself. Suddenly there came a series of sharp tearing pains all around my skull. I was prodded and poked and a voice said in my own language, "Ah well, let us revive him!" A subdued buzz of which I was conscious only when it ceased, was terminated with a faint click. Immediately I felt alert, alive, and tried to sit up. Again I was frustrated, my most violent efforts produced no movement at all in my limbs. "He is with us again," said a voice. "Hey! Can you hear us?" asked another.

' "Yes, I can," I replied, "but how is it that you are speaking Tibetan? I thought that only Sir Doctor could communicate with me." There was a subdued laugh; "you are using OUR language," was the reply. "You will now understand everything that is said to you."

'Another voice broke in, in an aside, "What do you call him?" One whom

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I recognized to be the doctor answered, "Call him? OH! We have no name for him, I just say 'you'."

"The Admiral requires that he have a name," asserted another, "decide how he is to be addressed." A quite animated discussion took place during which many names were suggested. Some of them were VERY insulting and indicated that to these men I enjoyed less status than that which we afforded yaks, or the vultures which fed upon the dead. Eventually, when the comments were becoming too ribald, the doctor stated: "Let us end this, the man is a monk. Let us therefore refer to him as that and call him 'Monk'." There was a moment of silence, and then spontaneous noises made with the hands and which I rightly took to be applause. "Very well," said a voice which I had not previously heard, "carried unanimously; henceforth he shall bear the cognomen of Monk. Let it be so recorded."

A desultory discussion followed, one in which I had no interest as it appeared that these men were discussing the virtues and lack of virtues of various of the females and appraising the degree of ease with which they could be had. Certain of their anatomical allusions were completely beyond my comprehension, so I made no attempt to follow the trend of discussion but contented myself with visualizing in my mind their probable appearance. Some of the men were small and some of them were very large. Now that was a very strange thing and one which puzzled me exceedingly for as far as I knew there were no peoples on Earth who possessed features and size ranges such as these men possessed.

I was jerked back to the present by a sudden shuffling of feet and by what appeared to be the sliding back of those strange seats. The men stood up and one by one left the room. At last there was one only remaining, the doctor. "Later," he said, "we shall take you again to the Council Chamber, the one inside the mountain. Do not be nervous, there is nothing to fear, Monk, it will be strange to you, but you will not be harmed." So saying, he too left the room and I was alone with my thoughts again. For some extraordinary reason one particular scene kept presenting itself to my shuddering memory. I was tied spread-eagle fashion against a wall. One of the Chinese torturers approached me with a fiendish smile and said, "One last chance to tell us what we want, or I will pluck out your eyes."

I replied, "I am a poor, simple monk, and I have nothing to tell." With that the Chinese torturer thrust a finger and thumb hard into the corners of my left eye and the eye popped out like the stone from a plum. It hung dangling on my cheek. The pain of the distorted vision was terrible; the right eye, as yet intact, looked straight ahead, the left eye, swaying and dangling on my cheek,

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looked straight down. The mental impressions were terrible. Then, with a quick jerk, the Chinaman tore the eye free and threw it in my face before giving the same treatment to the right.

'I remembered how at last satiated with their orgy of torture, they had thrown me out on a garbage heap. But I was not dead, as they believed, the coolness of the night had revived me and I had wandered off, blindly, stumbling, until at last some "sense" had led me from the Chinese Mission grounds, and eventually out of the City of Lhasa. With such thoughts I lost all track of time, and it was somewhat of a relief when at last men came to my room. Now I could understand what was said. A special lifting device, something with the strange name of Antigravity, was positioned over my table and "switched on". The table rose into the air and men guided it through the doorway and into the corridor beyond. It seemed that although the table now had no apparent weight, it still had inertia and momentum, although that meant nothing to me! Care was still needed that no damage should take place. That DID matter to me.

'Carefully the table and associated equipment was towed or pushed down the metal corridor with its distorted echoes and out of the vessel of space. We came into the great rock chamber again and there was about me the sounds of a great concourse of people reminding me of the forecourt of the Cathedral of Lhasa in happier days. My table was moved along and at last was swung about and lowered the few inches to the floor. To my side came a person who whispered, "The Surgeon-General will be with you in a moment."

'I spoke back: "Are you not going to give me sight?" But he had gone and my request went unheeded. I lay there trying to picture in my mind all that was happening. I had just the memory of the brief glimpse I had had previously, but I greatly desired that the artificial sight would be provided.

'Familiar footsteps echoed on the rocky floor. "Ah! They have brought you safely. Do you feel all right?" asked the doctor - the Surgeon-General.

'"Sir Doctor," I replied, "I would feel much better if you would permit me to see."

'"But you are BLIND and you must get used to being blind, you will have to live a very long life in that state."

'"But, Sir Doctor"" I said in some considerable exasperation, "HOW am I to learn and memorize all these wonders which you promised I would SEE if you will not provide me with that artificial sight?"

'"Leave it to us," he answered, "WE will ask the questions and give the orders, YOU just do as you are told."

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'There now came upon the crowd around me a hush, not a silence, for there cannot be a silence where people are congregated. In the hush I could distinguish very sharp footsteps which ceased abruptly. "Be seated!" commanded a curt, military voice. There was a relaxed rustling, the rustling of stiff cloth, the creak of leather, and the shuffling of many feet. A scraping sound as though one of those strange seats had been pushed back. The sound of a man rising to his feet. A tense, expectant hush pervaded the place for a second or so and then the voice spoke.

' "Ladies and Gentlemen," carefully enunciated this deep, mature Voice, "our Surgeon-General considers that this native is now sufficiently recovered in health, and indoctrinated, so that he may without undue risk be prepared with the Knowledge of the Past. There is a risk, of course, but we must face it. If the creature dies, then we must again resume the tedious search for another. This native is in poor condition physically; let us therefore hope that his will is strong and his hold on life firm." I felt my flesh creep at this callous disregard of MY feelings, but the Voice went on:

' "There are those among us who consider that we should use only written Records revealed to some Messiah or Saint whom we have placed upon this world for that purpose, but I say that these Records have in the past been given a superstitious reverence which has nullified their benefits because they have so often been misconstrued, misinterpreted. The natives have not sought the meaning contained within the writings but have taken their face value alone, and often falsely interpreted face value at that. Frequently it has harmed their development and has set up an artificial caste system under which certain of the natives assume that THEY have been chosen by Higher Powers to teach and preach that which was NOT written.

' "They have no real conception of us of outer space. Our patrol ships, when sighted, are deemed to be various natural celestial objects or mere hallucination on the part of the beholders who are therefore mocked and their sanity is frequently questioned. They believe that Man is made in the image of God and therefore there cannot be life greater than Man. They have the firm conviction that this puny world is the ONLY source of life, not knowing that the inhabited worlds are greater in number than the grains of sand upon this whole world, and that their world is one of the smallest and most insignificant.

' "They believe that THEY are the Masters of Creation and all the animals of the world are theirs to prey upon. Yet their own life-span is but the twinkling of an eye. Compared to us, they are as the insect which lives for but a day and has to be born, grow to adulthood, mate, and mate again, and die all within hours. Our average life-span is five thousand years, theirs a few de-

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cades. And all this, ladies and gentlemen, has been brought about by their peculiar beliefs and by their tragic misconceptions. For this reason they have been ignored by us in the past, but now our Wise Ones say that in the span of half a century these natives will discover some of the secrets of the atom. They may thereby blow up their little world. Dangerous radiations may escape into space and constitute a threat of pollution.

‘ “As most of you know, the Wise Ones have decreed that a suitable native be caught - we have caught this one - and his brain be treated whereby he may remember all we are going to teach him. He will be so conditioned that he can reveal this ONLY to one whom we shall in due time place upon this world with the task of telling all who will listen to the facts and not the fancies of others in worlds beyond this small universe. This native, a male, has been specially prepared and will be the recipient of the message which has to be transmitted later to another. The strain will be very great, he may not live through it, so let us all think strength to him for if his life ends upon this table, then we have again to commence our search for another, and that, as we have found, is tedious.

‘ “A crewmember has protested that we should take a native from a more developed country, one who enjoys high standing among his fellows, but we believe that that would be a false move; to indoctrinate such a native and let him loose among his fellows would be to ensure his immediate discreditation among others of his kind, and would seriously delay our programme. You, all of you who are here, are going to be permitted to witness this recall of the Past. It is rare indeed, so remember you are being favoured above others.”

‘No sooner had this Great One ceased to speak before there came a strange strange rustling and creaking. And then a Voice but WHAT a Voice! It sounded inhuman, it sounded neither male nor female. Hearing it I felt my hair rise and little pimples form on my flesh. “As Senior Biologist, responsible neither to the navy nor the army,” rasped this most unpleasant Voice, “I desire to put on record my disapproval of these proceedings. My full report will be forwarded to Headquarters in due course. I now demand to be heard here.” There seemed to be a sort of resigned gasp from all those assembled. There was for a moment much fidgeting and then the first speaker rose to his feet. “As Admiral of this fleet,” he remarked dryly, “I am in charge of this supervisory expedition no matter what specious arguments emanate from our disgruntled senior biologist. However, let us hear once again the arguments of the opposition. You may continue, Biologist!”

‘Without a word of thanks, without the usual formal salutation, the drawling rasping voice continued: “I protest at the waste of time. I protest that we

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should use any more endeavors on these faulty creatures. In the past, when a race of them were unsatisfactory - they were exterminated and the planet re-seeded. Let us save time and work and exterminate them now before they pollute space."

"The Admiral broke in, "And have you any specific suggestion as to WHY they are faulty, Biologist?"

"Yes, I have," the Biologist remarked angrily. "The females of the species are faulty. Their fertility mechanism is at fault, their auras do not conform to that which was planned. We caught one recently from what is referred to as one of the better areas of this world. She screeched and fought when we removed the clothing with which she was swathed. And when we inserted a probe into her body to analyze her secretions - she became first hysterical and then unconscious. Later, conscious again, she saw some of my assistants and the sight deprived her of her sanity, or such of it as she possessed. We had to destroy her and all our days of work were lost."

The old hermit ceased to speak and took a sip of water. The young monk sat almost stupefied with horror at the strange things he had heard, at the strange things which had happened to his superior. Some of the descriptions were in a strange way FAMILIAR. He could not say how, but the hermit's remarks evoked strange stirrings, stirrings as though suppressed memories were being revived. As though the hermit's remarks were indeed a catalyst. Carefully, without spilling a drop, the ancient man set his bowl of water by his side, folded his hands together, and resumed . . .

"I was upon that table, I heard and understood every word. All fear, all uncertainty left me. I would show these people how a priest of Tibet could live, or die. My natural rashness constrained me to utter, loudly, "See, Sir Admiral, your Biologist is less civilized than we, for WE do not kill even those who might be termed inferior animals. WE are the civilized ones!"

For a moment the whole of Time stood still. Even the breathing of those about me seemed to stop. Then, to my profound amazement and indeed shock, there came spontaneous applause and not a few laughs. People smacked their hands together which I understood was a sign of approval among them. People uttered cries of delight, and some technician near me bent and muttered, "Good for you, Monk, good for you. Now say no more, do not chance your luck!"

The Admiral spoke, saying, "The native Monk has spoken. He has demonstrated to my satisfaction that he is indeed a sentient creature and fully capable of completing the task allotted to him. And, er, I fully endorse his remarks and will embody them in my own report to the Wise Ones." The Biolo-

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gist snapped out sharply: "I will withdraw from the experiment." With that, the creature - he, she, or it - made a very noisy withdrawal from the rock chamber. There was a collective sigh of relief; obviously the Senior Biologist was not a person in great favour. The murmur died down in response to some manual admonition which I could not see. There came a slight shuffling of feet and the rustling of paper. The air of expectancy was almost tangible.

' "Ladies and gentlemen," came the voice of the Admiral, "now that we have disposed of objections and interruptions I propose to say a few words for the benefit of those of you who are fresh to this Supervisory Station. Some of you have heard rumors, but rumors are never reliable. I am going to tell you what will happen, what it is all about, that you may the better appreciate the events in which you will soon participate.

' "The people of this world are developing a technology which, unless checked, may well destroy them. In the process they will so contaminate space that other infant worlds in this group could adversely be affected. We must prevent that. As you well know, this world and others in this group are our testing grounds for different types of creatures. As with plants, that which is not cultivated is a weed; in the animal world one can have thoroughbreds or scrubs. The humans of this world are becoming of the latter category. We, who seeded this world with humanoid stock, must now ensure that our other stock on other worlds is not endangered.

' "We have before us here a native of this world. He is from a subdivision of a country which is named Tibet. It is a theocracy, that is, it is ruled by a leader who places greater importance in the adherence to a religion than he does to politics. In this country there is no aggression. No one fights for the lands of another. Animal life is not taken except by the lower orders who almost always without exception are native of other countries. Although their religion appears fantastic to us, yet they live it completely and do not molest others, nor do they force their beliefs on others. They are most peaceful and require a very great amount of provocation before they will resort to violence. It was therefore thought that here we could find a native with a phenomenal memory which we could even increase. A native in whom we could implant knowledge which has to be passed on to another whom we shall later place upon this world.

' "Some of you may wonder why we cannot tell our representative direct. We cannot do it with complete satisfaction as it leads to omissions and aberrations. It has been tried on a number of occasions but never has it been as we wished it to be. As you will later see, we tried it with fair success with a man whom the earthlings named Moses. But even with him it was not COM-

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PLATE and errors and misunderstandings were prevalent. Now, in spite of our respected Senior Biologist, we are going to try this system which has been worked out by the Wise Ones.

“Just as their superb scientific skill millions of earth-years ago perfected the faster than light drive, so have they also perfected a method whereby the Akashic Record itself can be tapped. In this system the person who is within the special apparatus will see all that happened in the past. So far as his impressions will tell him, he will actually LIVE all those experiences; he will SEE and HEAR precisely as though he were living in those long bygone days. To him HE WILL BE THERE! A special extension direct from his brain will enable each one of us vicariously to participate. He - you - or should I say ‘we’ —shall to all intents and purposes cease to exist in this time and will, so far as our feelings, sight, hearing and emotions are concerned, be transferred to those ages past whose actual life and happenings we shall be experiencing just as here, now, we have been experiencing shipboard life, or life aboard small patrol ships, or working in this world far below the surface in our subterranean laboratories.

“I do not pretend to understand fully the principles involved. Some of you here know far more of the subject than I, that is why you are here. Others, with different duties will know less than I and it is to them to whom I have been addressing these remarks. Let us remember that we too have some regard for the sanctity of life. Some of you may regard this native of Earth as just another laboratory animal, but as he has demonstrated, he has his feelings. He has intelligence and - remember this well - to us at present, he is the most valuable creature upon this world. That is why he is here. Some have queried, ‘But how will stuffing this creature with knowledge save the world?’ The answer is that it will not.”

The Admiral made a dramatic pause. I could not see him, naturally, but I assumed that others also experienced the tension which was overwhelming me. Then he continued, “This world is very sick. WE know it is sick. We do not know why. We are trying to find out why. Our task is first to recognize that a state of sickness exists. Second, we must convince the humans here that they are sick. Third, we must induce in them a desire to be cured. Fourth, we must discover precisely what is the nature of the illness. Fifth, we must evolve a curative agent, and six, we must persuade the humans to do that which will effect the cure. The sickness is connected with the aura. Yet we cannot discover why. Another must come, must be not of this world - for can a blind man see the ailment of his fellows when he too is blind?”

“That remark gave me quite a jolt. It seemed to me to be contradictory; I

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was blind, yet I was being chosen for this work. But no, no, I was not; I was merely to be the repository of certain knowledge. Knowledge which would enable another to function according to prearranged plan. But the Admiral was again speaking.

‘ “Our native, when he is prepared by us, when we have finished with him, will be taken to a place where he can live out the days of a (to him) very long life. He will not be able to die until he has passed on his knowledge. For his years of blindness and solitude he will have inner peace and the knowledge that he will be doing much for his world. But now we will have a final check on the native’s condition and then we will commence.”

‘ Now there was considerable, but ordered, bustle. I sensed people moving swiftly about. My table was grasped, raised, and moved forward. There came the by now familiar tinkle and chink as glassware and metal came into contact. The Surgeon-General came to me and whispered: “How are you now?”

‘ I hardly knew HOW I was or WHERE I was, so I merely responded by saying, “That which I have heard has not made me feel any better. But do I still have no sight? How am I to experience these wonders if you will not give me sight once again?”

‘ “Just relax,” he whispered soothingly, “everything will be all right. You will see in the best possible way at the right moment.”

‘ He paused a moment while some other person came and addressed a remark to him, then continued, “This is what will happen. We shall draw upon your head that which to you will appear to be a hat made of wire mesh. It will appear cold until you become accustomed to it. Then we shall put upon your feet articles which you may interpret as wire sandals. We already have wires going to your arms. You will first experience some strange and quite possibly uncomfortable tingling, but that will soon pass and you will have no further physical discomfort. Rest assured that we will take every possible care of you. This means a very great deal to all of us. We all want it to be a great success; there is too much to lose for it to be a failure.”

‘ “Yes,” I muttered, “I stand to lose more than any, I stand to lose my life!”

‘ The Surgeon-General stood up and turned away from me. “Sir!” he said in a very official tone of voice, “the native has been examined and is now ready. Permission requested to proceed.”

‘ “Permission granted,” replied the grave voice of the Admiral. “Proceed!” There came a sharp click and a muttered exclamation. Hands grasped

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me behind the neck and raised my head. Other hands pulled what seemed to be a metal bag of soft wire over my head, over my face and then they fumbled beneath my chin. There were three strange pops and the metal bag was tightly over me and fastened around my neck. The hands moved away. Other hands meanwhile were at my feet. Some strange, greasy evil-smelling lotion was rubbed in and then two metal bags were pulled around my feet. I was not at all used to having my feet thus constrained and it was truly most unpleasant. Yet there was nothing I could do. The air of expectancy, of tenseness, was growing.'

In the cave the old hermit suddenly toppled over backwards. For a long moment the young monk sat in petrified horror, then galvanized into action by the emergency, he jumped to his feet and scrabbled beneath a rock for the special medicine placed there in preparation for just such an occurrence. Wrenching out the stopper with hands which shook somewhat, he dropped to his knees beside the old man and forced a few drops of the liquid between his slack lips. Very carefully, so as not to spill a single drop, he replaced the stopper and laid aside the container. Cradling the hermit's head on his lap he gently stroked the old man's temples.

Gradually a faint trace of colour returned. Gradually there came signs that he was recovering. At last, quaveringly, the old hermit put out his hand and said, 'Ah! You are doing very well, my boy, you are doing very well. I must rest awhile.'

'Venerable One,' said the young monk, 'just rest here, I will make you some hot tea, we have a little sugar and butter left.'

Tenderly he placed his folded blanket under the old man's head and rose to his feet. 'I will put the water on to boil,' he said, reaching for the can which was yet half full of water. It was strange, out in the cold air, to reflect upon the marvellous things he had heard. Strange, because so much of it was . . . FAMILIAR. Familiar, but forgotten. It was like waking from a dream, he thought, only this time memories were flooding back instead of fading away as does a dream. The fire was aglow. Quickly he tossed on handfuls of small twigs. Dense blue clouds rose and billowed in the air. A vagrant breeze swirling around the mountainside twisted a tendril of smoke over the young monk and sent him back reeling and coughing and with eyes streaming. Recovered, he carefully placed the can in the heart of the now bright fire. Turning, he reentered the cave to make sure that the hermit was recovering.

The old man was lying on his side, obviously very much better in health. 'We will have some tea and a little barley,' he said, 'and then we shall rest until the morrow, for I must conserve my waning strength lest I fail and leave my

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task uncompleted.' The young monk dropped to his knees beside his elder and looked down at the thin, wasted form.

'It shall be as you say, Venerable One,' he remarked, 'I came in to make sure that you were all right, now I will fetch the barley and see about making the tea.' He rose swiftly and moved to the end of the cave to get the sparse supplies.

Gloomily he looked at the small amount of sugar left in the bottom of the bag. Even more gloomily he examined the remnants of the butter block. Of tea there was an adequate supply, it had merely to be knocked off the brick and the worst of the twigs and leaves picked out. The barley, too, was in sufficient supply. The young monk resolved to do without sugar and without butter so that the Old One should have enough.

Outside the cave the water was bubbling merrily in the can. The young monk dropped in the tea and stirred it vigorously and then added a small lump of borax to make it taste better. By now the light of day was fading, the sun was setting fast. There was much work to be done yet, though. More firewood had to be fetched, more water, and he had not been out all day for any exercise. Turning, he hastened back into the dimming cave. The old hermit was sitting up and waiting for his tea.

Sparingly he sprinkled a little barley in his bowl, dropped in a small pat of butter, and then held out the bowl for the young monk to fill it up with tea. 'This is more luxury than I have had in more than sixty years,' he exclaimed. 'I think I can be forgiven for having something hot after all these years. I could never manage a fire alone, tried it just once and set my robe on fire. Yes, I have a few scars on my body from those flames, but they healed. Took many weeks, but they healed. Oh well, that comes of trying to pamper oneself!' He sighed heavily, and sipped the tea.

'You have one advantage, Venerable One,' laughed the young monk. 'Light and dark mean nothing to you. In this darkness I have just upset my tea through not being able to see it.'

'Oh !' exclaimed the old man, 'here - have mine.'

'No, no, Venerable One,' replied the young man affectionately, 'we ,have plenty. I will just pour myself some more.' For a time they sat in companionable silence until the tea was all gone, then the young monk rose to his feet and said

'I will now go and get more water and firewood, may I take your bowl that I may clean it?' Into the now empty water-can went the two bowls as the

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younger man made his way out of the cave. The old hermit sat erect, waiting, just waiting as he had waited for many decades past.

The sun had now set. Only the upper peaks of the mountains were still bathed in golden light, light which turned to purple even as the young monk watched. Deep in the shadowed flanks of the mountain range small specks of light appeared one by one. The butter lamps of far distant lamaseries gleaming through the cold clear air of the Plain of Lhasa. The shadowed outline of Drepung Lamasery loomed like a walled city lower down the valley. Here, on the mountain side itself the young man could look out over the City, the lamaseries, and watch the gleaming Happy River. Far away on the other side the Potala and Iron Mountain were still imposing in spite of the apparent diminution of size through the great distance.

But there was no time to waste! The young monk scolded himself in shocked surprise at his dilatoriness and hastened off along the darkening path to the edge of the lake. Quickly he washed and scoured the two bowls and the water-can. Hastily he scooped the can full of clean water and set off along the path back, dragging with him the large branch which previously he had been too laden to handle. Stopping for a moment to regain his breath, for the branch was very large and heavy, he looked back towards the mountain pass leading to India. There glowed afar the flickering light which must denote a caravan of traders encamped for the night. No trader ever traveled by night. The young man's heart leaped, tomorrow the traders would wend their slow way along the mountain trail and would no doubt make their camp at the lakeside before going on to Lhasa the day after. Tea! Butter! The young man grinned to himself and took up his burden renewed.

'Venerable One!' he called as he entered the cave with the water. 'There are traders on the pass. Tomorrow we may have butter, sugar. I will keep close watch for them.'

The old man chuckled as he remarked, 'Yes, but for now -we sleep.' The young man helped him to his feet and placed his hand on the wall. Shakily he went off to the inner compartment.

The young monk lay down and scooped the depression for his hip bone. For some time he lay there thinking of all that he had heard. Was it TRUE that humans were weeds? Just experimental animals? No, he thought, some of us are doing our best in very difficult circumstances and our hardships were to encourage us-to do better and climb upwards, for there is always room at the top! So thinking, he fell into a sound sleep.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE young monk turned over and shivered. Sleepily he rubbed his eyes and sat up. The entrance to the cave was a dim grey blur against the blackness of the interior. There was a sharp sting to the air. Quickly the young man put his robe about him and hastened to the entrance. Here the air was cold indeed, with the wind moaning through the trees and making the leaves rustle. Small birds nestled close to the trunks on the lee side. The surface of the lake was roiled and turbulent, with wind-driven waves pounding against the banks and making the reeds bow down in protest against the force.

The newborn day was grey and troubled. Sweeping black clouds billowed over the mountain ridge and swept down the slopes like sheep being hounded along by the dogs of heaven. The mountain passes became hidden in clouds as black as the rock itself. Still the clouds came swooping down, obliterating the countryside, drowning the Plain of Lhasa in a sea of rolling fog. A sudden gust of wind, and the cloud formation swept over the young monk. So thick it was that he could no longer see the cave entrance. Nor could he see his hand placed before his face. Slightly to the left of where he stood the fire hissed and spattered as the moisture drops fell upon it.

Hastily he broke sticks and piled them upon the still-glowing fire and blew that the sticks would the more easily ignite. The damp wood spat and smoked and was long in waking to flame. The moaning of the wind rose to a shriek. The cloud became thicker and the violent pounding of hailstones drove the young monk to cover. The fire hissed and slowly died. Before it was quite extinguished, the young man dashed out and seized a branch which was still aflame. Quickly he dragged it to the mouth of the cave where it was sheltered from the worst of the storm. Unhappily he dashed out again to rescue as much of the firewood as possible, firewood that now was streaming with water.

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For a time he stood panting after his efforts, then removing his robe he wrung it out, expelling most of the water. Now the fog was invading the cave and the young man had to feel his way in by holding on to the rock wall. Cautiously he made his way further in until at last he collided with the great rock beneath which he was wont to sleep.

'What is it?' queried the voice of the old hermit.

'Do not worry, Venerable One,' replied the young man soothingly, 'the clouds have descended and our fire is all but extinguished.'

'Never mind,' said the old man philosophically, 'there was water before there was tea, let us therefore drink water and postpone tea and tsampa until the fire permits.'

'Yes, Venerable One,' responded the younger man, 'I will see if I can rekindle a fire beneath the overhanging rock, I saved a burning branch for that purpose.'

He made his way out to the entrance. Hailstones were falling in torrents, the whole ground was covered with ice pebbles and the gloom was even more intense. There came a whiplike crack followed by the deep rumble of thunder, a rumble which echoed and reechoed around the wide valley. From nearby came the slithering of falling rocks and the ground shook as they made their impact upon the mountain base. One of the frequent rockfalls started by the vibration of the thunder or perhaps a great rock had been split by the lightning. The young man wondered if any other hermitage had been swept aside like a feather in a gale. For a time he stood there listening, wondering if he would hear a call for help. At last he turned away and stooped over the glowing branch. Carefully he broke small pieces of twig and fed the flames anew. Dense clouds of smoke arose and were blown valley-wards by the storm, but the flames, sheltered by the rocky outcrop, grew apace.

In the cave the old hermit was shivering as the chill, wet air seeped through his thin and tattered robe. The young monk felt his blanket, and that too was saturated. Taking the old man by the hand he led him slowly to the cave entrance and bade him sit. The younger man carefully pulled the flaming branches closer so that the Old One could feel the heat and be cheered. 'I will make some tea,' he said, 'we now have enough fire.' So saying, he hurried back into the cave for the water-can, and soon returned with it and the barley. 'I will tip out half the water,' he said, 'then we shall not have so long to wait and anyway the fire is a little small for a full can.' Side by side they sat, protected from the worst onslaughts of the elements by the rocky overhang and by the side outcropping. The cloud was thick and no bird sang nor moved.

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'There will be a very hard winter,' exclaimed the old hermit. 'I am fortunate that I shall not have to endure it. When I have given all my knowledge to you I can lay down my life and shall be free to depart to the Heavenly Fields where once again I shall be able to see' He mused in silence for a moment while the young monk watched the slow steam form on the surface of the water, then he continued, 'It is hard indeed to wait all these years in total blackness, with no man to call "friend", to live alone in such poverty that even warm water seems a luxury. The ages have dragged by and I have spent a long life here in this cave, journeying no further from it than I have now journeyed to this fire. For so long have I been silent that even my voice comes forth in a veritable croak. Until you came I have had no fire, no warmth, no companionship during the storms when the thunder shook the mountains and the rocks came tumbling down, threatening to wall me in.'

The young man rose and wrapped the fire-dried blanket around his elder's thin shoulders and then turned back to the water-can, the contents of which were now bubbling merrily. Into the can went a generous lump of tea-brick. The bubbling ceased as the cold particles brought the water below the boiling point. Soon the steam rose again and into the water went the borax and the last of the sugar. The newly peeled stick was brought into energetic use, and a flat piece served as a scoop to remove the worst of the twigs and debris from the surface.

Tibetan tea - China Tea - is the very cheapest form of tea consisting of FLOOR SWEEPINGS from the better grades. It is the residue left after the women have picked the plants of all the choice leaves and thrown aside the dust. The whole is compressed into blocks, or bricks, and carried over the mountain passes to Tibet where Tibetans, who can afford nothing better, obtain the bricks by barter and use it as one of the staples of their hard existence. Borax is a necessary additive as the raw tea is so crude and rough that stomach cramps are frequent. A definite part of the ritual of tea making consists of scraping the surface clear of debris!

'Venerable One,' asked the young monk, 'have you never been to the lake? Never wandered up to that large stone slab to the right of this cave?'

'No,' replied the hermit, 'since I was brought into this cave by the Men from Space I have never been further away from it than this point where we now sit. Why should I? I cannot see what there is about me, I cannot travel with safety to the lake, for I might fall in. After the long years in the cave, in darkness, I find that the rays of the sun are troublesome to my flesh. When first I came here I used to feel my way to this point and be warmed by the sunlight, but now for many a long year I have remained inside. What is the weather like

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now?’

‘Bad, Venerable One,’ replied the young monk. ‘I can see our fire, I can see the faintest outline of a rock beyond. All else is blanketed by this greasy grey fog. The storm clouds from the mountain, a storm from India.’

Idly he examined his nails, very long they were. Uncomfortably so. Casting about he found a strip of rotten stone, burned rock flung out of the mountain by some volcanic upheaval ages ago. Energetically he rubbed the slip of rock against the nail of each finger until it was worn down to a suitable length. Toenails too, they were thick and hard. But far too long. Resignedly he hoisted up one foot and then the other until at last he had all his nails trimmed to his satisfaction.

‘You cannot see any pass?’ queried the old man. ‘Are the traders fogbound in the mountains?’

‘They most certainly are!’ exclaimed the young man. ‘They will be telling their beads in the hope of keeping the devils away. We shall not see the traders this day - or night - until the fog lifts. And even then the ground is covered with frozen hail. It’s THICK here.’

‘Well, then,’ answered the Old One, ‘we should get on with our talk. Is there any more tea?’

‘Yes, there is,’ replied the young monk. ‘I will fill your bowl but you must drink it quickly, for it is cooling rapidly. Here it is. I will put on some more wood.’ He paused to place the bowl in the old man’s outstretched hands, and rose to throw more wood on the cheering fire. ‘I will fetch some more of the wood from out of the rain,’ he called moving into the thick fog. Soon he returned dragging branches and twigs which he placed around the perimeter of the fire. Proximity to that heat would soon cause the steam to rise and the wood to dry. ‘Well, Venerable One,’ he said, seating himself near the old man, ‘I’m ready to listen when you are ready to speak.’

For some minutes the old man remained silent, probably reliving in his mind those long-past days. ‘It is strange,’ he remarked eventually, ‘to sit here as the poorest of the poor, as one poor even among the poor, and to contemplate the wonders which I have witnessed. I have experienced much, seen much, and been promised much. The Keeper of the Heavenly Fields is almost ready to welcome me in. One thing I HAVE learned -and you will do well to remember it in the years ahead, is this -THIS life is the shadow life. If we do our tasks in THIS life we shall go to the REAL life hereafter. I know that for I have seen it. But now let us continue with that which I am charged to tell you. Where was I?’

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He hesitated and stopped for a moment. The young monk took the opportunity to throw more wood on the fire, Then the hermit spoke again; 'Yes, the air of tension in that rock chamber grew and grew and I was the most tense of all. Reasonably so, for all the risk was to ME! At last, when the tension had reached an almost unbearable point, the Admiral uttered a cult command. There was a movement of some technician near my head and a sudden click. Immediately I felt all the pains of Hell surge through my body; it seemed that I was swelling and was about to burst. Jagged lightning flashed across my brain, and my empty eye-sockets felt as though filled with glowing coals. There was an intolerable wrenching, a sharp, painful snap, and I went spinning and whirling through (I felt) all eternity. Crashes, bangs, and horrendous noises accompanied me.

'Down and down I fell, spinning and tumbling head over heels. Then I felt as though I were in a long black tube of woolly, clinging material and at the top of the tube there appeared a blood-red glow. Now the spinning ceased, and I began a slow slow ascent towards the glow. Sometimes I slid back, sometimes I halted, but always a terrible, inexorable pressure drove me on again, painfully, hesitantly, but always upward. At last I reached the source of the blood-red glow and could go no further. A skin, or membrane, or SOMETHING obstructed my passage forward. Again and again I was forced against the obstacle. Again and again I was prevented from proceeding. The pain and the terror increased. A violent surge of pain and a terrific force behind me slammed me again and again against the barrier; there was a screaming, ripping sound, and I was propelled at vast velocity through the crumbling barrier.

'Upwards I sped until my consciousness dimmed and was extinguished by the appalling shock. There was a fading impression of falling, falling. In my brain a Voice was dinning, "Get up, get up!" Wave after wave of nausea engulfed me. Ever that forceful Voice exhorted "get up, get up!" At last, in sheer desperation, I forced open my eyes and stumbled to my feet. But no, no, I HAD no body; I was a disembodied spirit free to roam anywhere on this world. This world? What was this world? I looked about me and the strangeness of the scene grew upon me. The colours were all wrong. The grass was red and the rocks were yellow. The sky was of a greenish cast and -there were two suns! One was blue-white and the other orange. The shadows! There is no way in which to describe the shadows cast by two suns. But worse, stars were showing in the sky. In daylight. There were stars of all colours. Reds, blues, greens, amber, and even white. Nor were they scattered as were the stars to which I was accustomed; here the sky was covered with these stars as the ground is covered with stones.

'From afar Came - NOISE, SOUNDS. By no stretch of imagination could I

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call those sounds music, yet I had no doubt that it was music. The Voice came again, cold and implacable, "MOVE, WILL yourself where you want to go." So I thought of floating to the spot from whence there came the sounds - and I was there. On a level patch of red grass, with the purple and orange trees fringing the edge, there danced a group of young people. Some were clad in garments of startling hues, others were not clad at all. Yet these latter excited no comment. Off to one side others sat on seats on legs and played instruments which it is quite beyond my ability to describe. The noise they made is even more impossible of description! All the tones seemed to be wrong, and the beat had no meaning to me. "Go among them" commanded the Voice.

'It suddenly occurred to me that I was floating above them, so I willed myself to a clear patch of grass and thought myself upon it. It was hot to the touch and I feared that my feet would scorch, until I remembered that I had none and was but a disembodied spirit. The latter was soon made apparent to me; a naked young female chasing a garishly-clad young man ran right through me and neither of us felt a thing. The young female caught her man and linking her arms with his, led him off behind the purple trees from the locality of which there came many screams and shouts of joy. The users of musical instruments went on misusing them, and everyone seemed to be remarkably content.

'I rose upon the air quite without my own volition. I was directed as is a kite directed by the boy who holds the string. Higher and higher I rose until afar I could discern the glint of water - or was it water? The colour was a pale lavender which gave off flashes of gold from wave crests. The experiment had killed me, I decided, I am in Limbo, in the Land of the Forgotten People. No world could have such colours, such strange strange things. "No!" muttered that inexorable Voice in my brain, "the experiment was a success. You will have a commentary now on all that happens that you may be the better informed. It is VITAL that you comprehend all that is shown you. Pay great attention." Pay great attention Could I do aught else? I wondered ruefully.

'I rose higher and higher. From afar came the glitter of burning gleams upon the skyline. Strange and fearsome Shapes stood there, like Devils at the Portals of Hell. Faintly I could discern bright spots which dipped and rose and shot from Shape to Shape. And all around there were vast roadways which radiated away from those Shapes as the petals of a flower radiate away from its centre. All this was a mystery to me; I could not imagine the nature of that which I saw and could but float there amazed.

'Abruptly I found myself jerked into motion again and with increasing speed. My altitude lessened. I descended, quite involuntarily, to a point where I could discern individual homes dotted along each of the radiating roadways.

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Each home seemed to me to be at least the size of those of the highest nobles of Lhasa, each contained within a quite sizeable plot of ground. Strange metal things lumbered across the fields doing those things which only a farmer could describe. But then, as I was brought much lower, I discovered a very large estate which consisted mainly of shallow water in which there were perforated benches. Wondrous plants were resting upon the benches, and their roots trailed in the water. The beauty and size of these plants were immeasurably greater than those growing in the soil. I gazed, and wondered at these marvels.

'Again I was lofted to whence I could see far ahead. The Shapes which had so intrigued me from afar were now much closer but my bemused brain was not able to comprehend that which I saw, it was too stupendous, too utterly incredible. I was a poor native of Tibet, just a humble priest who had never been further abroad than one short visit to Kalimpong. Yet here before my astonished eyes - DID I have eyes? - loomed a great city, a fabulous city. Immense spires soared perhaps eighteen hundred feet into the air. Each spire, or tower, was beringed with a spiral balcony from each of which radiated slender, unsupported roadways joining the whole into a web more intricate than that spun by spiders. The roadways were thronged with speeding traffic. Above and below fluttered mechanical birds laden with people, each avoiding all others with a skill which filled me with the utmost admiration. A speeding mechanical bird came upon me. I saw a man in the front staring but seeing me not. My whole body contracted and writhed with fear at thought of the impending collision, yet the contraption sped on, through me, and I felt it not. What was I? Yes, I remembered, I was now a disembodied spirit, but I wished someone would tell my brain that for I experienced every emotion, and principally fear, that a normal complete body would have experienced.

'I loitered among those spires and dangled over the roadway. And I discovered new marvels; certain high levels had stupendous hanging gardens. Incredible playgrounds for what were obviously nobles. But the colours were all wrong. The people were all wrong. Some were vast giants and others were dwarfs. Some were definitely human and others very definitely were not. Some, indeed, were a strange mixture of humanoid and avian, with the body seemingly of human construction, yet possessing a definitely birdlike head. Some were white, some were black. Some were red, while other were green. There were all colours, not merely hues and tints, but definite, primary colours. Some had four fingers and a thumb on each hand, yet others had nine fingers and two thumbs on each hand. And one group had three fingers, horns extending from the temples and - tail! My nerve broke at the latter sight and I willed myself UP - fast.

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'From my new altitude the city clearly covered an immense area, it extended as far as I could see, but at one distant side there appeared a clearing which was free of tall buildings. Here the air traffic was intense. Shining dots, for so they appeared from this distance, soared with eye-baffling velocity in a horizontal plane. I found myself drifting towards that district. As I approached, I discovered that the whole area seemed to be made of glass, and upon its surface there were strange metal craft. Some were spherical in form and seemed from their direction of travel to journey beyond the confines of this world. Others, like two metal bowls stuck rim to rim also appeared to be far out of world travel. Yet others were like the spear that is thrown, and I observed that these, after rising to a predetermined height, then became horizontal and journeyed to an unknown place upon the surface. There was stupendous movement and I could scarce believe that all these people could be contained within one city. All the inhabitants of a world were congregated here, I thought. BUT WHERE WAS I? I felt panic rise.

'The Voice answered me saying, "You must understand that the Earth is a small place, the Earth is as one of the smallest grains of sand upon the banks of the Happy River. The other worlds of this Universe in which your Earth is located are as numerous and as diverse as the sand, the stones, and the rocks which line the banks of the Happy River. But this is just one Universe. There are universes beyond number just as there are blades of grass beyond number. Time upon Earth is just a flickering in the consciousness of cosmic time. Distances upon Earth are of no moment, they are insignificant and do not exist compared to the greater distances in Space. Now you are upon a world in a far, far different Universe, a Universe so remote from the Earth which you know that it would be beyond your comprehension. The time will come when the greatest scientists of your world will have to admit that there are other worlds inhabited, and that Earth is not, as they now believe, the centre of creation. You are now upon the chief world of a group numbering more than a thousand. Each of those worlds is inhabited, each of those worlds owe allegiance to the Master of the world where you now are. Each world is entirely self-governing although they all follow a common policy, a policy aimed at removing the worst injustices under which people live. A policy devoted to improving conditions of all who have life.

' "Each world has a different sort of person upon it. Some are small as you have seen, some are large as you have also seen. Some, by your standards, are grotesque and fantastic, others are beautiful, angelic you might say. One should never be deceived by outward appearances, for the intention of all is good. These people owe allegiance to the Master of the world upon which you now are. It would be useless and a strain to your intelligence to try to give

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to you names because the names would have no meaning in your own tongue, in your own comprehension, and would merely serve to confuse you. These people owe allegiance, as I have said, to the Great Master of that world, One who has no territorial desires whatever, One whose main interest is in the preservation of peace, peace so that all Man no matter his shape, his size or his colour may live out the days allotted to him and devote himself to good instead of the destruction which will ensue whenever a person has to defend himself. Here there are no great armies, there are no battling hordes. There are scientists, traders, and of course priests, and there are also explorers, those who go out to remote worlds ever increasing the number of those who join this mighty fellowship. But none are invited to join. Those who join this federation do so at their own request and only when they have destroyed weapons.

‘ “The world upon which you now are is the centre of this particular Universe. It is the centre of culture, the centre of knowledge and there is none greater. A special form of travel has been discovered and developed. Here again to explain such methods would be to overtax the brains of the greatest scientists of the Earth, they have not yet reached the stage of thinking in four and five dimensional concepts, and such a discussion would be gibberish to them until they can rid their minds of all those beliefs which have so long held them captive.

‘ “The scenes you now see are the leading world as it is today. We want you to travel its surface to see its mighty civilization, a civilization so advanced, so glorious that you may not be able to comprehend. The colours you see here are different to those to which you are accustomed on Earth, but Earth is not the centre of civilization. Colours are different on each world and depend upon the circumstances and requirements of each of those worlds. You will look about this world, and my voice will accompany you, and when you have seen enough of this world to make its greatness apparent you will travel into the past and then you shall see how worlds are discovered, how worlds are born, and how we try to help those who are willing to help themselves. Remember this always; we of space are not perfect for perfection cannot exist when one is in the material state of being in any portion of any universe, but we try, we do the best we can. There are some in the past, as you will agree, who have been very good, and some who to our sorrow have been very bad. But we do not desire your world, the Earth, we desire instead that you should develop it, that you should live there, but we must ensure that the works of Man do not pollute Space and endanger the people of other worlds. But now you will see more of this, the leading world.”

‘I mused upon all these worlds,’ said the old hermit, ‘I pondered deeply on the portent behind the remarks because it seemed to me that all this talk of

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brotherly love was but a sham. My own case, I thought, is one which shows up the fallacy of this argument. Here am I, admittedly a poor and ignorant native of a very poor, arid, underdeveloped country, and absolutely against my wishes I was captured, operated upon, and so far as I knew forced out of my body. Here I was - where? The talk of doing so much for the good of humanity seemed rather hollow to me.

'The Voice broke in upon my disturbed thoughts saying, "Monk, your thoughts are vocalized to us by our instruments, and your thoughts are not correct thoughts, your thoughts, indeed, are the fallacies. We are the Gardeners and a gardener has to remove dead wood, he has to pluck unwanted weeds. But when there is a better shoot then sometimes the gardener has to take away the shoot from the parent plant and even graft elsewhere, that it may develop as a new species, or even develop more greatly as its own species. According to your own beliefs you have been rather roughly treated. According to our beliefs you are being given a signal honour, an honour reserved for very very few people of the world species, an honour reserved." The Voice hesitated and then went on, "Our history goes back billions of years of Earth time, billions and billions of years, but let us suppose that the whole life of your planet which you call Earth was represented by the height of the Potala, then the lifetime of Man upon the Earth could be likened to the thickness of one coat of paint upon the ceiling of one room. Thus it is, you see, Man is so new upon the Earth that no human has the right to even attempt to judge what we do.

' "Later your own scientists will discover that their own laws of mathematical probabilities will indicate clearly that there is evidence of the existence of extraterrestrials. It will also indicate that for real evidence of extraterrestrials they must look beyond the far reaches of their own island universe and out into other universes beyond that which contains your world. But this is neither the time nor the place to indulge in a discussion of this nature. Accept the assurance that you are doing good work and that we know best in this. You wonder where you are, and I will tell you that your disembodied spirit, only temporarily detached from your body, has journeyed beyond the furthest reaches of your own universe and has gone right to the centre of another universe, to the centre city of the chief planet. We have much to show you and your journey, your experiences, are just beginning. Be assured, however, that what you are seeing is that world as it is now, as it is at this moment, because in the spirit time and distance mean nothing.

' "Now we want you to look about to familiarize yourself with that world upon which you now dwell so that you may the more easily credit the evidence of your senses when we come to much more important things because soon we shall send you into the past, into the past through the Akashic Record where

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you will see the birth of your own planet, Earth."

'The Voice ceased,' said the old hermit, and he stopped for a few moments while he took a sip of his tea which was now quite cold. Reflectively he set aside his bowl and clasped his hands together, after rearranging his robe. The young monk rose and put more wood upon the fire and pulled the blanket more tightly round the old hermit's shoulders.

'Now,' continued the old man, 'I was telling you that I was in a state of panic; yes indeed I was in a state of panic, and then as I dangled there over this immensity I found myself dropping, I found myself passing various levels or bridges between great towers, I found myself dropping down to what appeared to be a very pleasant park raised on a platform, or so it seemed so supported to me. There was the red grass, and then to my astonishment at one side I found green grass. There was a pond in the red grass which had blue water and another pond in the patch of green grass which had heliotrope water. About the two were congregated an amazing assortment of peoples. By now I was beginning to distinguish somewhat which were natives of this world and which were visitors from afar. There was something subtle in the bearing and comportment of those who were native here. They appeared the superior species, and fully aware of that status.'

'About the pools there were those who appeared possessed of great masculine virility and those who were extremely feminine. A third group of people who were obviously epicene. I was interested to observe that all the people here were quite naked except that the females wore things in their hair. I could not distinguish what they were but they seemed to be some type of metal ornament. I willed myself away from that spot because some of the sport of these naked people was not at all to my liking having been brought up from my very earliest days in a lamasery, and so in an entirely male environment. I but dimly understood the purport of some of the gestures which the females were indulging in. I willed myself up and away.'

'I sped across the remainder of the city and came to the outskirts where the habitation was sparse. But all the fields and plantations were marvelously cultivated and many large estates were, I perceived, devoted to hydroponic farming. But that would be of little interest other than to those studying agronomy.'

'I rose higher and cast about for some objective to which I might direct myself, and I saw a marvelous saffron sea. There were vast rocks fringing the coastline, rocks of yellow, rocks of purple, rocks of all hues and tints, but the sea itself was saffron. This I could not understand. Previously the water looked a different colour. Gazing upwards I perceived the reason. One sun had set,

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and another was rising which made three suns! And with the increasing ascension of the third sun and the descent of one other the colours were changing, even the air appeared of a different tint. My bemused gaze beheld the grass land blurred by, land, a broad river, a spit of land, and again changing its colour, from red it turned to purple, from purple it turned to a yellow, and then the sea itself gradually changed colour too. It reminded me of the manner in which at eventide when the sun was setting low over the high ranging mountains of the Himalayas colours would sometimes change, and how instead of the bright shining of day in the valleys a purple twilight would form and even the high snows would lose their pure white and appear to be blue or crimson. And so, as I contemplated the matter, this was no great strain upon my comprehension. I surmised that the colours were always changing on this planet.

'But I did not want to go over water never having seen much before. I had an instinctive dread of it and a fear that some mishap might occur, that I might fall in. So I directed my thoughts inwards, inland; at this my disembodied spirit wheeled around and I sped for a few miles over rocky coastline and small farm areas. And then to my ineffable delight I found that I was over terrain which was somewhat familiar, it reminded me of moorlands. I swooped low and saw the little plants nestling together on the face of that world. Now with the difference in sunlight they appeared to be little violet coloured flowers with brown stems, akin to heather. Further along there was a bank of that which, under this lighting, resembled gorse, yellow gorse, but here the plant had no thorns to it.

'I rose a few hundred feet and gently drifted along over this the most pleasant sight which I had seen on this strange world. To these people, no doubt this would be a very desolate area. There was no sign of habitation, no sign of roads. In a pleasantly wooded dell I found a small lake and a little stream trickling over a high cliff tumbled into it and fed it. I lingered awhile, watching the changing shadows, and their vari-hued fingers of light permeating through the branches above my head. But there was this continuous urging that I should keep on the move. I had the impression that I was not here for my own amusement, my own pleasure, my recreation; I was here that others could see through me. I was lifted again and flung high in the air, and prodded into extreme speed. Beneath me the sea. Against my will I was propelled over that sea until I came to what was no doubt another land, another country. Here the cities were smaller but entirely vast. Accustomed, as I was now, to size they were small but much, much larger than anything I would ever hope to see upon the Earth which I had now left.

'My motion was checked rather abruptly and I went into a steep spiral swirling around. And then I looked down. Below me was a most wonderful es-

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tate, it appeared to be an ancient castle set in the midst of woods. The castle was absolutely immaculate and I marveled at the turrets and battlements which surely had no place in a civilization such as this. As I was pondering upon the matter, the Voice broke in, "This is the home of the Master. This is a very ancient place indeed, the most ancient building in this ancient world. This is a shrine to which all peacelovers come that they may stand outside the walls and give their thanks in thought for peace, for the peace that encompasses all who live under the light of this empire. A light where there is never darkness, for here there are five suns and there is no dark. Our metabolism is different from that of your world. We do not need the hours of darkness to enjoy our sleep. We are arranged differently." "

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE old hermit stirred restlessly and shivered beneath the thin blanket. 'I will enter the cave again,' he said, 'I am not used to being out in the open so much.' The young monk, contemplating that amazing tale of a bygone age, came to alertness with a jerk. 'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'the clouds are rising. Soon we shall be able to see.' Carefully he took the old man by the hand and led him clear of the fire and into the cave which now was clear of fog. 'I must fetch fresh water and wood,' said the young man. 'When I return we will have some tea, but I may be rather longer than usual as I have to wander further abroad in search of wood. We have used up all that which was near,' he said ruefully. Leaving the cave he piled the rest of the wood on the fire and scooped up the water-can before setting off down the path.

The clouds were lifting rapidly. A fresh wind was blowing and even as the young monk looked the clouds rose high and revealed the mountain pass. So far he could not see the small black dots which would be the traders. Nor could he distinguish fire smoke from drifting clouds. The traders were still resting, he thought, taking advantage of the enforced stop in order to catch up on sleep. No man could traverse the mountain passes during cloud falls, the dangers were too great. A false step would send man or beast thousands of feet down to rocky pinnacles far below. The young man thought of a quite recent accident when he was visiting a small lamasery at the foot of a cliff. The clouds were low, just above the lamasery roof. Suddenly there had come a slither of falling stones and a hoarse scream. There had come a shriek and a squishy thud - like a bag of wet barley being tossed on the ground. The young man had looked up to see a man's intestines looped over a rock some twelve feet above and still connected to the man lying dying on the ground. Another poor trader, or traveler, who was journeying when journeying should not be, he thought.

The lake was still covered in fog and the tops of the trees loomed ghostly

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and silver as the young man made his way forward. Ah! A GREAT find, a whole tree branch had been ripped from the trunk by the storm. He peered through the thinning haze and decided that the tree had been struck by lightning during the storm. Branches were all around, and the tree trunk itself was split wide open. So near to the cave, too, he thought. Gleefully he grasped the largest branch he could manage and slowly dragged it back to the cave mouth. Journey after journey he made until he was so exhausted that he could manage no more. Wearily filling the can with water, he made his way back to the cave. Stopping only to put the water on to boil, he went in and spoke to the hermit.

'A whole tree, Venerable One! I have put the water on to boil and after we have had tea and tsampa I will fetch much more wood before the traders come and burn the lot.'

The old hermit sadly replied, 'There will be no tsampa, being unable to see, and trying to help, I slipped and spilled all the barley. It now rests among the earth of our floor.' With a gasp of dismay the young monk leaped to his feet and hurried to where he had left the barley. None was left. Falling to his hands and knees he scrabbled around at the base of the flat rock. Earth, sand and barley were inextricably mixed. Nothing could be salvaged. Here was disaster. Slowly he rose to his feet and moved towards the hermit. A sudden thought sent him scurrying back; the tea brick - was THAT safe? Scattered lumps lay on the ground on the far side. The old man had knocked the brick over and then trodden it into the ground except for these few lumps.

Sadly the young monk walked across to the older man. 'There is no more food, Venerable One, and we have tea for this time only. We must hope that the traders come today or we shall hunger.'

'Hunger?' replied the Old One. 'Often I am without food for a week or more. We can still drink hot water; to one who has had nothing to drink but cold water during more than sixty years, hot water is a luxury.' He was silent for a few moments, and then added, 'Learn to endure hunger now. Learn fortitude now. Learn always to have a positive approach NOW, for during your life you will know hunger and suffering; they will be your constant companions. There are many who will harm you, many who will attempt to drag you down to their level. Only by a positive mind - always positive - will you survive and surmount all those trials and tribulations which inexorably will be yours. NOW is the time to learn. ALWAYS is the time to practice what you learn NOW. So long as you have faith, so long as you are POSITIVE, then you can endure anything, and can emerge triumphant over the worst assaults of the enemy.'

The young monk almost fainted with fright; all these allusions of impending calamity. All these forecasts of near-doom to come. All these warnings and

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exhortations. Was NOTHING happy and bright in the life he had to live? But then he remembered his Teachings; This is the World of Illusion. All life on this world is illusion. Here our Great Overself sends its puppets that Knowledge may be gained, that imagined difficulties may be overcome. The more precious the material the more stringent the tests and only faulty material fails. This is the World of Illusion where Man himself is but a shadow, an extension in thought of the Great Overself which dwells elsewhere. Still, he thought glumly, they could be a bit more cheerful.

But then, it is said that no man is given more than he can bear, and Man himself chooses what tasks he shall perform, what tests he shall undergo. 'I must be mad,' he said to himself, 'if I arranged THIS load of trouble for myself!'

The old hermit said, 'You have fresh bark on the branches you brought?'

'Yes, Venerable One, the tree was struck by lightning. Yesterday it was intact,' replied the younger man.

'Then peel off the bark, strip the white lining from the dark outer skin, discard the latter, and place the white fibres in the boiling water. It makes a most nourishing food although the taste is not ideal. Do we have any salt, or borax, or sugar left?'

'No, Sir, we have nothing except sufficient tea for this one drink.'

'Then throw the tea in the can as well. But cheer up, we shall not starve. Three or four days without food will merely increase your mental clarity. If things should become bad you can easily go to the nearest hermitage for food.'

Glumly the young monk set about the task of separating the layers of bark. The dark outer skin, coarse and rugged helped to feed the flames. The smooth, greenish-white under layer to be torn into shreds and stuffed into the now-boiling water.

Gloomily he tossed in the last lump of tea and jumped high as a splash of boiling water scalded his wrist. Grasping a newly peeled stick he prodded and stirred the mess in the can. With considerable apprehension he withdrew the stick and tasted the end to which a few drops of the concoction adhered; his worst fears were speedily realized. The stuff tasted like hot nothingness. Flavored with weak tea!

The old hermit held out his bowl. 'I can eat this, when I first came here there was nothing else for me to eat. In those days there were small trees right up to the entrance. I ate them! Eventually people became aware of my presence, and most times since I have had a supply of food. But I never worry if I have to remain without for a week or ten days. There is always water. What

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more can a man want?’

Sitting in the gloom of the cave at the feet of the Venerable One, with the daylight growing stronger and stronger outside, the young monk thought that he had been sitting thus for a whole eternity. Learning, always learning. Fondly his thoughts turned to the flickering butter-lamps of Lhasa, now in his mind almost a thing of the past. How long he had to remain was a matter of conjecture - until the old man had nothing more to tell him, he supposed. Until the old man had died and HE had to dispose of the body. The thought sent a shiver of apprehension through him. How macabre, he thought, to be talking to a man and then, just an hour or so after, to be unraveling his intestines for the vultures, or pounding up his bones that no fragment should be left unreturned to the earth. But the old man was ready. He cleared his throat, took a sip of water and composed his limbs.

‘I was as a disembodied spirit spiraling down to the great castle which housed the Master of this Supreme World,’ commenced the old hermit. ‘I was longing to see what manner of man commanded the respect and love of some of the most powerful worlds in existence. I was avid to determine what manner of man - and woman - could endure throughout the centuries. The Master and his Wife. But it was not to be. I was jerked as a small boy might jerk the cord of his kite. I was jerked away backwards. “This is sacred ground,” said the Voice very dourly, “this is not for ignorant natives, you are to see other things.” And so it came about that I was towed many miles and then turned about and set upon a different path.

‘Beneath me the features of that world diminished and the cities became even as the grains of sand upon a river bank. I rose into the air and out of the air; I traveled where air was not. Eventually there came in range of my vision a strange structure the like of which I had never seen. The purpose of which I could not comprehend. Here, in the airless void, where I could not exist save as a disembodied spirit, there floated a city of metal kept aloft by some mysterious method quite beyond my power to discern. As I approached, the details became clearer and I perceived that the city rested upon a land of metal and covering its upper portions there was a material which was clearer than glass yet was not glass. Beneath that transparent sheen I could observe people in the streets of the city, a city larger than the city of Lhasa.

‘There were strange protuberances on some of the buildings and it was to one of the larger of the edifices that I found myself directed. “Here is a great observatory,” said the Voice within my brain. “An observatory from whence the birth of your world was witnessed. Not by optical means, but by special rays which are beyond your comprehension. Within a few years the people of

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your world will discover the science of Radio. Radio, in its highest development, will be as the brain power of a lowly worm compared to the brain power of the most intelligent human. What we use here is far far beyond even this. Here the secrets of universes are probed, the surface of distant worlds watched even as you now watch the surface of this Satellite. And no distance, no matter how great, is a bar. We can look into temples, into places of play, and into homes."

'I approached yet more closely and feared for my safety as that clear barrier loomed large before me. I feared to crash into it and suffer lacerations, but then, before panic set in, I recollect that I was now as one of the spirits to whom even the most substantial walls were as shadows to be crossed at will. Slowly I sank through this glass-like substance and came upon the surface of that world which the Voice had termed "Satellite". For a time I drifted hither and thither, trying to settle the turbulent thoughts within me. It was a shocking experience for "an ignorant native of an undeveloped country in a backward world" to endure - and remain fairly sane.

'Softly, like a cloud drifting over a mountain range, or a moonbeam flitting silently over a lake, I began to drift sideways, away from the idle movements in which I had previously indulged. I moved sideways and filtered through strange walls of a material quite unknown to me. Even though I was even then as a spirit, yet there was some slight opposition to my passage for I endured a tingling of my whole being and - for a time - a sensation that I was stuck in a tenacious bog. With a curious wrenching which seemed to shred my whole being, I left the constraining wall. As I did so I had the strong impression of the Voice saying, "He's got through! I thought for a time he wouldn't make it."

'But now I was through the wall and into an immense covered space, it was too large to be demeaned by the term "room". Quite fantastic machines and apparatus stood about. Things completely beyond my understanding. Yet the strangest things by far were the inhabitants of the enclosure. Very very small humanoids busied themselves with things which I dimly understood to be instruments, while giants moved heavy packages from place to place and did the hard work for those who were too weak. "Here," said the Voice in my brain, "we have a very great system. Small people make delicate adjustments and build small items. Large people do things more in keeping with their size and strength. Now, move on." That imponderable force propelled me once again so that I encountered, and overcame, yet another barrier to my progress. This was even harder to enter and leave.

' "That wall," murmured the Voice, "is a Death Barrier. No one can enter

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or leave while in the flesh. Here is a very secret place. Here we look at all the worlds and we detect immediately any warlike preparations. Look!" I looked around me. For moments that which was before me had no meaning. Then I got a grip on my reeling senses and concentrated. The walls around me were divided into rectangles about six feet long by about five feet high. Each was a living picture beneath which were strange symbols which I took to be writing. The pictures were amazing. Here was one in which a world was depicted as though seen from space. It was blue-green, with strange white patches. With a great shock I perceived that this was my own world, the world of my birth. A change in an adjacent picture drew my immediate attention. There was a deplorable sensation of falling as I gazed and I saw that I was watching a picture of MY world as though I were falling on to it.

"The clouds cleared, and I saw the whole outline of India and Tibet. No one told me that this was so, yet I knew it by instinct. The picture grew larger and larger. I saw Lhasa. I saw the Highlands, and then I saw the volcanic crater—"But you are not here to see that!" exclaimed the Voice. "Look elsewhere!" I looked about me and marveled anew at that which I saw. Here, on this picture, was the interior of a council chamber. Very important-looking individuals were in animated discussion. Voices were raised, and hands too. Papers were thrown about with a shocking disregard for decorum. On a raised dais a man with a purple face was speaking frantically. Applause and condemnation in about equal measure greeted his remarks. It all reminded me of a meeting of Lord Abbots!

'I turned about. Everywhere were these living pictures. Everywhere these strange scenes, some in the most improbable colours. My body moved on, on into yet another room. Here were pictures of strange metal objects moving across the blackness of space. "Blackness" is not the word to use, for space here was speckled with points of light of many colours, many of those colours previously quite unknown to me. "Space ships in transit," said the Voice. "We keep careful track of our traffic." Amazingly a man's face leaped into life on a portion of the wall. He spoke, but I did not understand his words. He nodded his head and gestured as though he were talking face to face with a person. With a smile and gesture of farewell the face vanished and the wall frame was again a smooth grey sheet.

'Immediately it was replaced by a view as seen by a high-flying bird. A view of the World I had just left, the World which was the centre of this vast empire. I looked down upon the great city, seeing it in utter realism, seeing the whole immense spread of it. The picture moved rapidly so that I was again looking down on that district wherein was the residence of the Master of this great civilization. I saw the great walls, and the strange, exotic gardens in which

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the building was set. Saw too a beautiful lake with an island at its centre. But the picture moved, cast hither and thither, sweeping the landscape as does a bird in search of prey. The picture halted. Grew larger and focussed on a metal object which was describing lazy circles and sinking towards the ground. The picture swelled so that only the metal object was shown. A man's face appeared and he was speaking, replying to unknown questions. A wave of greeting, and the picture went blank.

'I moved not of my own volition. My directed mind left that strange room and entered another. Stranger! Here, at nine of these picture screens sat nine old men. For a moment I stared in stupefied amazement, then I began to chuckle almost with hysteria. Here were nine old men, all bearded, all very similar in appearance, all of the gravest mien. In my poor brain the angry Voice thundered: "SILENCE, sacrilegious one. Here are the Wise Ones who control your destiny. Silence, I say, and show respect." But the old wise men took no notice - yet they were aware of my presence, for upon one screen there was a picture of me on Earth, a picture of me surrounded by wires and tubes. Yet another picture showed me HERE! A most unnerving experience indeed.

'"Here," continued the Voice in a most equable tone, "are the Wise Ones who have called for your presence. They are our wisest men who for centuries have devoted themselves to the good of others. They work under the direction of the Master Himself, who has lived even longer. Our purpose is to save your world: To save it from what threatens to be suicide. To save it from the utter pollution which follows a nuc... but no matter, these are terms which have no meaning for you; terms which as yet have not been invented on your world. Your world is about to have a fairly intense change. New things will be discovered, new weapons will be invented. Man will enter space within the next hundred years. Thus it is that we are interested."

'One of the Wise Ones did things with his hands, and the pictures changed, world after world flitted across the screens. People after people made their brief debut and vanished to be replaced by others. Strange glass bottles became luminous and wriggling lines undulated across their exposed bottoms. Machines clattered and ejected long paper tapes which curled into baskets placed near. Paper tapes covered with remarkable symbols. The whole affair was so far beyond my understanding that even now, after all these years of thinking about it, I still cannot discern the meaning of all I saw. And ever the Old Wise Ones made notes on strips of paper or spoke into discs held near their mouths. And in response there would come a disembodied voice which spoke even as a man speaks, but the source of which I could not detect.

'At last, when my senses were reeling under the impact of such strange

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events, the Voice in my brain said, "Of this you have seen sufficient. Now we will show you the past. To prepare you, I will tell you what you will experience, then you will not be frightened." FRIGHTENED? I thought to myself; if he but knew I AM ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED "First," resumed the Voice, "you will experience blackness and some spinning. Then you will see what you think is this room. Actually it will be as this room was millions of years ago by YOUR time, but which is not so long by ours. Then you will see how, first, your universe was created, and then, later, how your world was born, how it was stocked with creatures among them those we call Man." The Voice faded, and my consciousness with it.

'It is a disturbing sensation to be so summarily deprived of one's consciousness, to be robbed of a portion of one's life-span and not even know for how long one has been unconscious. I became aware of swirling grey fog which sent tendrils right into my brain. Intermittent glimpses Of SOMETHING tantalized me and added to my general frustration. Gradually, like a morning mist dissipating before the rays of the rising sun, my awareness, my lucidity, returned. Before me the world became light, no, it was not the world, but the room in which I floated betwixt floor and ceiling like a lazy puffball rising and falling in tranquil air. Like the incense clouds billowing in a temple I lingered aloft and contemplated that which was before me.

'Nine old men. Bearded. Grave. Intent upon their tasks. WERE they the same? No, they were not, the room was different. The screens and instruments were different. And the pictures were different. For a time there was no word spoken, no explanation of what all this portended. At last one old man reached out and turned a knob. A screen lit up and showed stars the pattern of which I had not seen before. The screen expanded until it filled the whole of my vision, until it appeared that I had a window on space. The illusion was so great that I had the feeling that I was in space without even a window. I stared at the cold, motionless stars shining with such an unfriendly, hard glare.

' "We will speed it up a millionfold," said the Voice, "or you will not perceive anything in your lifetime." The stars began a rhythmic swinging, about each other, about some unseen centre. From an outer edge of the picture there came speeding a vast comet with its flaming tail pointing toward that unseen, dark centre. Across the picture the comet flew, drawing together behind it other worlds. At last the comet collided with the cold, dead world which had been the centre of that galaxy. Other worlds, drawn out of their predestined orbits by the increased gravity, laced on a collision course. On the instant when comet and dead world collided the whole universe seemed to burst into flame. Whirling vortices of incandescent matter were flung across space. Flaming gases engulfed nearby worlds. The whole universe, as seen in the screen before me,

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became a mass of brilliant, violent flaming gas.

'Slowly the intense brightness pervading the whole of space subsided. At last there was a central flaming mass surrounded by smaller flaming masses. Gobbets of incandescent material were flung out as the great central mass vibrated and convulsed in the agony of the new conflagration. The Voice broke into my chaotic thought, "You are seeing in minutes that which took millions of years to evolve. We will change the picture." My whole vision was limited to the extent of the screen and that which I now perceived was of the star system receding so that I appeared to gaze from afar. The brightness of the central sun dimmed, yet it was still exceedingly bright. Worlds nearby still glowed red as they twisted and spun on their new orbits. At the speeded-up rate at which I was being shown, the whole universe seemed to be in whirling motion so that my very senses became bedazzled.

'Now the picture changed. Before me lay a great plain speckled with immense buildings some of which had strange projections spouting forth from their tops. Projections which seemed to me to be made of metal bent into curious shapes -the reason for this was quite beyond my intellect to understand. Swarms of people of widely diverging shapes and sizes converged upon a truly remarkable object located at the centre of the plain. It appeared to be a metallic tube of unimaginable size. The ends of the tube were less than the main girth and tapered rather to a point at one end and terminated in a rounded blob at the other. Protuberances extended at intervals from the main body and as I stared intently I could discern that these were transparent. Moving dots were inside and my observation led me to believe that they were people. I judged that the whole building was about a mile in length, or rather more. Its purpose was quite unknown to me. I could not understand why a building should have such a remarkable shape.

'As I watched intent on missing nothing, there swam into the picture a most remarkable vehicle drawing behind it many platforms laden with boxes and bales sufficient, was my idle thought, to stock all the market places of India. Yet - how could this be? - all were floating in the air as fish float and propel themselves in water. The strange device drew alongside the great tube which was a building and one after another all the bales and boxes were drawn inside so that the strange machine pulled away again with empty platforms following. The stream of people entering the tube diminished to a trickle and then ceased. Sliding doors slid, and the tube was closed. Ah! I thought, it is a temple, they are showing me that they have a religion and temples. Satisfied with my own explanation I let my attention flag.

'No words could describe my emotion as my gaze was jerked back to

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the picture. This great tubular building, about a mile long and about a sixth of a mile thick, suddenly ROSE INTO THE AIR! It rose to about the height of our highest mountain, lingered there for a few seconds and then - vanished! One instant it was there, a sliver of silver hanging in the sky with coloured lights of two or three suns playing upon it. Then, without even a flash it was not there. I looked about me, looked at adjacent screens and then I saw it. Here, upon a very long screen perhaps twenty five feet long, stars were whirling by so that they appeared merely as streaks of coloured light. Apparently stationary in the centre of the screen was the building which had just left this strange world. The speed of the passing stars increased until they formed an almost hypnotic blur. I turned away.

'A glare of light attracted my attention and I looked again at the long screen. At the far edge a light was appearing forecasting the advent of a greater light just as the sun sent rays over the mountain edge to foretell its approach. Quickly the light grew until it was intolerably bright. A hand stretched out and twisted a knob. The light was reduced while leaving the picture clear. The great tube, a mere insignificant speck in the immensity of space, drew near the bright orb. It circled round and then I was moved to another screen. For a moment I lost my orientation. I stared blankly at the picture before me. A picture of a large room wherein men and women dressed in what I now knew to be uniforms had their being. Some were sitting with hands on levers and knobs, others were watching screens even as I watched.

'One who was more gorgeously attired than the others paced around with his hands clasped behind his back. Frequently he would stop his pacing and peer over another person's shoulder while he looked at some written notes, or studied the wriggling lines which were manifested behind circles of glass. Then, with a nod, he would resume his pacing. At last I chanced to do likewise. I glanced at a screen as the Gorgeous One did. Here were flaming worlds, how many I could not count because the light dazzled me and the unaccustomed motion bewildered me. So far as I could guess, and guess alone, it was, there were about fifteen flaming goblets encircling the great central mass which had given them birth.

'The tube-building, which I now knew to be a spaceship, stopped, and much activity took place. Then from the bottom of the ship there appeared a great number of small ships circular in shape. They scattered hither and thither, and with their departure life aboard the great vessel resumed the even tenor of a well-ordered existence. Time passed, and eventually all the small discs returned to their parent ship and were taken aboard. Slowly the massive tube turned and sped like an affrighted animal through the reeling heavens.

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'In the fullness of time, how long I could not say as all the travel was speeded up, the metal tube returned to its base. Men and women left it and entered buildings on the perimeter. Before me the screen went grey.

'The shadowed room with the ever-moving screens upon the wall fascinated me beyond measure. Previously I had been too intent upon one or two screens, now, with those lying dead, inert before me I had time to look about. Here were men of approximately my own size, the size that I should imply when I used the word "human". They were of all colours, white, black, green, red, and yellow and brown. Perhaps a hundred sat in strange form-fitting seats which swayed and tipped with every movement. In rows they sat at instruments ranged along the far wall. The Nine Wise Ones sat at a special table in the centre of the room. Curiously I looked about me, but the instruments and other appliances were so far removed from anything previous in my experience that I have no way in which they could be described. Flickering tubes containing a ghastly green light, pulsing tubes of amber light, walls which WERE walls, although they radiated the same colour light as that out in the open. Glass circles behind which points fluttered wildly or held rock-steady at one point - would THAT convey anything to you?

'One section of wall swung out suddenly to reveal a stupendous mass of wires and tubes. Climbing up and down those wires were small people about eighteen inches high, small people festooned with belts containing shining implements which were tools of some kind. A giant came in carrying a large heavy box. He held it in place for moments while the small ones fastened the box at the back of the wall. Then the wall was swung shut and the small ones went out with the giant. Here there was silence. Silence save for a routine clicking and the shussh-shussh as the tape moved endlessly from a machine orifice to a special receptacle.

'Here, upon this screen, a strange strange thing was depicted. At first I thought to gaze upon a rock rough-hewed into human shape. Then, to my intense horror, I saw the Thing move. A crude arm-shape lifted and I saw that it held a large sheet of some unknown material upon which was inscribed writing-shapes. One could not say "writing" and let it go at that. It was so obviously alien that a special form of speech would have to be invented that it could be described. My gaze passed on; this was so far above me that it held no appeal or interest for me. I experienced only horror as I looked upon this travesty of humanity.

'But my wandering gaze stopped abruptly. HERE were Spirits, winged Spirits! I became so fascinated that almost I crashed into the screen as I moved closer with the hope of seeing more. It was a picture of a wonderful garden in

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which winged creatures disported. Human in shape, both male and female, they wove an intricate aerial pattern in the golden sky above their garden. The Voice broke in on my thoughts. "Ah! So you are fascinated, eh? These are the - (an unwriteable name) and they are able to fly only because they live in a world where the pull of gravity is very very low. They cannot leave their own planet for they are too fragile. Yet they have mighty and unsurpassed intelligence. But look about you at other screens. Soon you will see more of your own world's history."

"The scene changed before me. Changed deliberately I suspected so that I should see that which it was desired for me to see. First there was the deep purple of space and then an entirely blue world moved across from one edge until it occupied the centre of the screen. The image grew larger until it filled the view completely. It grew larger still and again I had the horrid impression of falling head-first out of space. A most distressing experience. Beneath me blue waves leaped and rolled. The world turned. Water, water, everywhere water. But one speck projected above the eternal waves. On the whole world there was a plateau about the size of the Valley of Lhasa. On it strange buildings loomed on the shore. Human figures flopped on the shore with their legs in the water. Other figures sat on rocks nearby. It was all mysterious and none of it made sense to me. "Our forcing shed," said the Voice, "where we raise the seed of a new race." "

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CHAPTER NINE

THE day was wearing on dragging weary hour after weary hour. The young monk gazed - as he had gazed most of the day up to the notch in the mountain range wherein was sheltered the Pass between India and Tibet. Suddenly he uttered a whoop of joy and turned on his heel before dashing into the cave. 'Venerable One!' he cried, 'they are starting down the path. Soon we shall have food.' Not waiting for an answer, he spun round and rushed out into the open. In the clear, cold air of Tibet minute details can be seen over long distances, there is no air pollution to mask one's sight. Over the rocky ridge came pouring black dots: The young man smiled with satisfaction. Food! Soon there would be barley, and tea.

Quickly he dashed down to the edge of the lake and filled the water-can so that it was even slopping over. Carefully and slowly he carried it back to the cave so that water would be available when the food was. Down the slope he hurried again that he might gather the last of the branches from the storm-blasted tree. A considerable pile of firewood was now stacked beside the glowing fire. Impatiently the young man climbed up the rock face above the cave. Shielding his eyes from the glare he stared out and upwards. A long line of animals moved away from the lake. Horses, not yaks. Indians, not Tibetans. Numbly the young monk stood there dwelling upon that awful thing. Slowly, heavily, he descended to ground level and reentered the cave. 'Venerable One,' he said sadly, 'the men are Indians, they are not coming our way and we have no food.'

'Worry not,' said the old hermit soothingly, 'for an empty stomach makes a clear brain. We shall manage, we must have patience.'

A sudden thought struck the younger man. Grasping the water-can he hurried to the rock where all the barley had been spilled: Carefully he sank to his knees and scabbled in the sandy soil. Here was barley - and sand. Sand

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will sink in water, he thought, while barley will float. Carefully he dropped handful after handful of soil in the water-can and tapped the side. The sand sank and the barley floated. Little lumps of tea brick floated too.

Time after time he scooped the barley and tea lumps from the surface of the water and placed them in his bowl. Soon he had to obtain the old hermit's bowl and at last, when the evening shadows were again creeping across the countryside, both bowls were full. Tiredly the young monk rose to his feet, hefted the sand-filled water-can and left the cave. Outside he lost no time in tipping out the useless contents of the can then, gloomily, he made his way down the path to the lake.

Night birds were coming awake, and the full moon was peeping over the mountain edge as he scoured the can and filled it with water. Wearily he washed his knees free of embedded sand and barley grains before lifting the can again and wending his way back to the cave. With a thump of resignation he dropped the can into the heart of the fire and sat by the flames while impatiently waiting for the water to boil. At last the first wisps of steam arose and mingled with the smoke of the fire. The young monk rose too and fetched the two bowls with the barley and tea - and quite a bit of earth! - mixture. Carefully he dumped the whole lot into the water.

Soon the steam was rising again. Soon after the water was bubbling energetically, stirring up the brown mess. With a flat piece of bark the young monk scooped off the worst of the floating debris. Unable to wait longer, he hooked a stick under the handle of the can and lifted it from the fire. First he dipped the old hermit's bowl in the can and scooped out a generous helping of the porridgey contents. Wiping his fingers on his already grubby robe, he hurried in to the old man with the unexpected and rather unsavory supper. Then he returned for his own food. It was eatable - just!

With the pangs of hunger but barely assuaged they lay down upon the hard and cheerless sandy soil for yet another night of sleep. Beyond the cave the moon rose high, and sailed in majestic decline beyond the far mountain range. Creatures of the night went about their lawful occasion, and the night wind rustled gently through the gaunt branches of the stunted trees. In far lamaseries the night proctors pursued their ceaseless vigil while in the back streets of the city those of ill-repute sat and plotted how they might secure the advantage over their more trusting fellows.

The morning was cheerless. The remnants of the sodden barley and tea leaves made but poor fare, but as the sole means of sustenance available it just had to be forced down. With the morning light growing and the newly fed fire sending out sputtering showers of sparks from surface-dried wood, the old

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hermit said, 'Let us continue the passing of knowledge. It may help us to forget our hunger.' Together the old man and the young entered the cave and sat in their accustomed positions. 'I drifted awhile,' said the hermit, 'like the thoughts of an idle man, without direction, without purpose. Vacillating, flitting from screen to screen as the fancy took me. Then the Voice intruded upon me, saying, "We must tell you more." As the Voice spoke I found that I was being turned and directed to the screens which I had first studied. Now again they were active. Upon one screen was depicted the universe containing what we now know to be the Solar System.

'The Voice resumed, "For centuries most careful watch was kept in case there should be any radiation hazard from the new System now in formation. Millions of years went by, but in the life of a universe a million years is as minutes in the lifetime of a human. At last another expedition set out from this, the heart of our empire. An expedition equipped with the most modern apparatus with which to determine the planning of new worlds which we should seed." The Voice ceased, and I looked again at the screens.

'The stars glittered cold and remote in the stupendous distances of space. Hard and brittle they shone with more colours than that of the rainbow. The picture grew larger and larger until a world was shown which seemed to be just a ball of cloud. Turbulent clouds slashed through and through with the most fearsome lightning. "It is not possible," said the Voice, "to make a TRUE analysis of a distant world by remote probes. At one time we believed otherwise, but experience has taught us our error. Now, for millions of years, we have sent expeditions. Look!"'

'The universe was swept aside as one draws aside a curtain. Again I saw a plain stretching out to what seemed to be infinity. The buildings were different, now they were long and low. The great vessel which stood there ready was different too. Something like two platters was this vessel, the lower half a platter standing as a platter should stand, while the upper rested upon the lower but inverted. It shone bright even as the full moon. Hundreds of round holes with glass behind them encircled the circumference. Upon the utmost elevation there rested a dome-shaped transparent room possibly some fifty feet across. The gigantic girth of the vessel entirely dwarfed the toiling machines which labored at its base to supply it.

'In groups there loitered men and women, all in strange uniform dress, all with a number of boxes reposing at their feet upon the ground. The talk seemed to be merry, the humour good. More ornately attired individuals strutted unapproachably backwards and forwards as though deliberating upon the fate of a world - as indeed they may have been. A sudden signal made them all

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bend quickly, seize their packages, and scurry to the waiting vessel. Metallic doors like the iris of an eye closed tightly behind them.

'Slowly the immense metal creation rose some hundred feet in the air. It hovered for a moment of time - and then just vanished leaving no trail of any kind to mark that it had ever existed. The Voice said, "It travels at a speed unthinkably faster than the speed of light. It is a self-contained world and when one is in these ships one is QUITE unaffected by any outside influences. There is no sensation of speed, no feeling of falling, not even on the sharpest turns. Space," continued the Voice, "is NOT the empty void that your own worldlings believe. Space is an area of reduced density. There is an atmosphere of hydrogen molecules. The separate molecules may be hundreds of miles apart admittedly, but at the speed generated by our vessels that atmosphere seems almost as dense as the sea. One hears the molecules rushing against the side of the ship and we had to take special measures to overcome the problem of heating through molecular friction. But look -!"'

'On an adjacent screen the disc-shaped vessel was tearing along leaving an almost intangible trail of faint blue light behind it. The speed was so great that as the picture moved to keep the ship centered, the stars appeared as solid lines of light. The Voice murmured, "We will omit the needless travel sequences and keep to the items which matter. Look at the other screen." I did so, and witnessed the vessel, now travelling very much more slowly, circling around the sun, OUR sun. But a sun very very different from what it is now. It was larger, brighter, and vast streamers of flame reached out far beyond its girth. The ship circled round, orbiting first one world and then another.

'At last it drew close to the world which somehow I knew to be the Earth. Completely enshrouded in clouds it rolled beneath the ship. Several orbits were made and then the vessel slowed even more. The picture changed and I was shown inside. A small group of men and women were walking down a long metal corridor. At the end they debouched into an enclosure wherein there were small replicas of the large vessel. Men and women walked up a ramp and entered one of these smaller ships. All other people left that area. Behind a transparent wall a man watched, his hands upon strange coloured buttons, with flashing lights before him. A light glowed green, and the man pressed several buttons simultaneously.

'A section of the floor retreated equally from the small ship, and opened as the iris of an eye opens. The ship fell through and entered into space. Lower and lower it glided until it was lost to our view in the clouds which encompassed the Earth. Then the picture before me changed again and I saw as from the small craft itself. Here were the swirling, billowing clouds, appearing first

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as impenetrable barriers, but melting away at the touch of the spaceship. Down down we went through miles of the cloud until at last we merged in to a dull, sullen day. Grey sea rolled and surged and in the distance seemed to merge with the grey clouds, clouds upon which were reflected ruddy glares from some unknown source.

'The spaceship leveled off and flew between cloud and sea. The miles passed, miles of endless, surging sea. Upon the skyline a dark mass appeared, a dark mass shot through by intermittent gouts of flame. The ship moved on. Soon below us there loomed a great mass of mountainous land. Vast volcanoes reared their ugly heads high towards the clouds. Tremendous flames shot forth and molten lava came tumbling down the mountain sides to plunge into the sea with a hissing roar. Although it had been a grey blur in the distance, close to the land appeared as a very dull red.

'The ship moved on and circumnavigated the world for a number of times. There was but one immense land mass surrounded by the tossing sea which, from the lower altitude, seemed to be steaming. At last it rose, entered space, and returned to the parent ship. The screen faded as that vessel sped again back to the Empire world.

'The Voice, now so accustomed to speaking in my brain, commented, "No! I am not merely speaking to you, I am also addressing those who are participating in this experience. Because you are so receptive you are aware of all my remarks by what we term acoustic feedback. But pay attention. This applies to you also.

' "The Second Expedition returned to - " (here there was a name, but it is beyond my power to pronounce it so I will transpose and say "our empire"). "Scientists studied the reports submitted by the crews. Assessments were made of the probable number of centuries before the world was fit for stocking with living creatures. Biologists and geneticists worked together to formulate plans for the best types of creatures to be made. When a new world is to be stocked, and when that world is the offspring of a nova, ponderous animals and heavy foliage is first required. All soil consists of powdered rock, with lava dust and certain trace elements. Such soil will support only coarse-feeding plants. Then those plants decay, and the animals die and decay and mix with the rock dust. In the course of millenniums 'soil' is formed. As the soil becomes more and more remote from the original rock, finer types of plants can be grown. In time, on any planet, the soil is really the cells of decayed animals and plants and the excreta of the former for aeons past."

'I had the impression that the Owner of the Voice paused while he surveyed his audience. Then he continued, "The atmosphere of a new planet is

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not at all breathable by humans. The effluvia from the belching volcanoes contains sulfur and many noxious and lethal gases. Suitable vegetation will overcome this by absorbing the toxins and returning them as harmless minerals to the soil. The vegetation will take the poisonous fumes and convert them to the oxygen and nitrogen which humanoids require. So, the scientists of many branches worked together for centuries preparing the basic stock. These were then placed upon a nearby world of similar conditions so that they could mature, so that we could ensure that they were entirely satisfactory. If necessary they could then be modified.

‘ “So, for ages the new planetary system was left to its own devices. Left while wind and waves eroded the sharp rock pinnacles. For millions of years tempests beat upon that rocky land. Powdered rock spilled forth from high peaks, heavy stones fell and rolled under the storms, grinding the rock-powder ever finer. The giant waves beat in fury on the land, breaking off spurs, bumping them together, reducing them to smaller and smaller particles. The lava that flowed white-hot into the waters fumed and foamed and split into millions of particles to become the sand of the sea. The waves flung the sand back on the land, and the continual scouring wore down the mountains from their miles-high altitude to merely tens of thousands of feet.

‘ “Endless centuries of Earth-time passed. The blazing sun blazed not so fiercely. No longer did flaming goblets become spewed out to engulf and incinerate adjacent objects. Now the sun burned fairly regularly. The nearby worlds too cooled. Their orbits steadied. Every so often little lumps of rock collided with other masses and the whole plunged into the sun, making a temporary increase in its flaming intensity. But the System was steadyng down. The world called Earth was becoming ready to receive its first life.

“At the Empire base a vast ship was being prepared to travel to the Earth and the members of what would be the Third Expedition were being trained in all matters relating to their coming task. Men and women were being selected for compatibility and for the absence of neurosis. Each space ship is a self-contained world in which the air is manufactured by plants and water is obtained from excess air and hydrogen - the cheapest thing in the whole universe. Instruments were loaded, general supplies, the new stock were carefully frozen ready to be reanimated at the appointed time. At long last, for there was no hurry, the Third Expedition was ready.”

‘I watched the vessel slide through the Empire universe, cross yet another, and enter that which contained at its distant edge the new Earth. There were many worlds circling around the bright sun. These were ignored; all attention was given to the one planet. The great vessel decelerated and swung

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in an orbit such that it was stationary relative to one point on the Earth. Aboard the ship a small craft was made ready. Six men and women entered and again an opening appeared in the floor of the parent ship through which the survey vessel dropped. Again on the screen I watched as it fell through the thick cloud and emerged a few thousand feet above the water. Moving in a horizontal plane it soon came to where the rock land projected above the water.

'The volcanic eruptions, although most violent, were yet less intense than previously. The shower of rock debris was less profuse. Carefully, very very carefully, the small ship sank lower and lower. Keen eyes searched the surface for the most suitable landing place and at last, with that location decided upon, it made landfall. Here, resting upon the hard surface, the crew made what appeared to be routine tests. Satisfied, four members of the crew donned strange garments which covered them from neck to feet. Upon their head each person placed a round transparent globe which connected in some way with the neck-piece of the garment already donned.

'Each picked up a case and entered a small room the door of which was carefully closed and fastened behind them. A light opposite another door glowed red. The black pointer on a circular dial commenced to move, and as it came to rest over an "O" the red light turned to green and the outer door swung open. A strange metal ladder, as though imbued with life of its own, rattled across the floor and extended down to the ground some fifteen feet below. One man carefully descended the ladder and stamped about as he reached the surface. From the case he drew a long rod which he thrust into the ground. Bending, he minutely examined the markings upon the surface of that rod and - rising to his feet - beckoned to the others that they should join him.

'The little party moved around seemingly at random, doing things which had no meaning for me. Save that I knew these to be intelligent adults I would have put down their antics to that of children playing games. Some picked up little stones and put them in a bag. Some hit the ground with hammers, or stuck in what appeared to be metal rods. Yet another, a female, I observed, wandered around waving little strips of sticky glass and then hastily inserted them in bottles. All these things were quite incomprehensible to me. At last they returned to their vessel and entered the first compartment. They stood still like cattle in a market place while remarkable coloured lights shone and moved over the entire surface of each. A light glowed green, and the other coloured lights were extinguished. The party removed their protective garments and entered the main body of the ship.

'Soon there was a great to-do. The female with the sticky glass strips rushed to put each one in a metallic device. Putting her face to it so that she

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looked through two tubes, she turned knobs, making comment to others the while. The man with the little pebbles tipped them into a machine which emitted a great whirr and suddenly ejected the pebbles which were now reduced to a very fine powder. Many tests were made. Many conversations were held with the great parent ship. 'Other of these vessels appeared, while the first one withdrew and returned to the greater vessel. Those which remained circled the whole of the world and from them there dropped articles which fell on to the land and others of a different type fell into the sea. Satisfied with their work, all the small craft drew close and formed a line after which they rose up and left the atmosphere of the Earth. One by one each reentered the mother ship, and when the last had so done the great vessel sped from that orbit and traveled to other worlds in that system. Thus it was that many, many years of Earth time was occupied.

'Many centuries passed on the Earth. In the time of a ship travelling through space it was but weeks, for the two times are different in some manner difficult to comprehend, but it IS so. Many centuries passed, and rough, coarse vegetation flourished on the land and under the waters. Vast ferns towered skywards, with immense, thick leaves absorbing the poisonous gases and breathing out oxygen by day and nitrogen by night. At long last an Ark of Space descended through the clouds and landed upon a sandy shore. Great hatches were opened and from out of the mile-long vessel lumbering, nightmare creatures came, so ponderous that the Earth shook to their tread. Horrendous creatures flapped heavily into the air on creaking leathern wings.

'The great Ark - the first of many to come throughout the ages - rose into the air and glided gently over the seas. At predetermined areas the Ark rested upon the surface of the water and strange creatures flopped into the ocean depths. The immense vessel rose and vanished into the remotest recesses of space. Upon the Earth incredible creatures lived and fought, bred and died. The atmosphere changed. The foliage changed, and the creatures evolved. The eons passed and from the Observatory of the Wise Ones, universes distant, watch was kept.

'The Earth was wobbling in its orbit; a dangerous degree of eccentricity was developing. From the heart of the Empire there came a special ship. The scientists decided that one land mass was insufficient to prevent the seas from surging and unbalancing the world. From the great vessel hovering miles above the surface a thin beam of light shot out. The exposed continent of the Earth shivered and cracked apart into smaller masses. Violent earthquakes took place. And in the fullness of time the land masses drifted apart forming ramparts against which the sea, now divided into SEAS, beat in vain. The Earth settled into stable orbit.

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'Millions of years crawled on. Millions of years of EARTH time. Again an expedition approached from the Empire. This time it brought the first humanoids to the world. Strange purple creatures were unloaded, the women having eight breasts, and men and women having a head set square on the shoulders so that to see at the side the whole body had to be turned. The legs were short and the arms were long, descending to below the knees. They knew naught of fire or weapons and yet they were ever quarrel. They lived in caves and in the branches of mighty trees. For food they had berries and grasses and the insects which crawled the earth. But the Watchers were not satisfied, for these were but mindless creatures who could not fend for themselves and who showed no signs of evolving.

'By now vessels of that Empire were on constant patrol through the universe which held the solar system. Other worlds here too were being developed. That of another planet was proceeding much more quickly than the Earth. A ship of the patrol was detached to go to the Earth where it landed. A few of the purple natives were captured and examined and it was decided that the whole race should be exterminated just as a gardener exterminates weeds. A pestilence fell upon the Earth, and all the humanoids were killed. The Voice broke in, saying, "In years to come your own Earth people will use this system to kill off a plague of rabbits, but your people will use a pestilence which will kill the rabbits in agony; WE do it painlessly."

'From the skies there came another Ark bringing different animals and very different humanoids. Throughout the lands they were distributed, a different type and perhaps a different colour chosen to suit the conditions of that area. The Earth still roared and rumbled. Volcanoes belched forth flames and fumes and the molten lava came pouring down the mountain sides. The seas were cooling and the life therein was changing to meet the altering conditions. At the two poles the waters were cold and the first ice on Earth was beginning to form.

'The Ages went by. The atmosphere of Earth changed. Giant fernlike growths gave way to orthodox trees. Life-forms became stabilized. A mighty civilization flourished. Around the world flew the Gardeners of the Earth visiting city after city. But some of them became too familiar with their human charges, or the women thereof. An evil priest of the human race persuaded a beautiful woman to seduce one of the Gardeners and to inveigle him so that he betrayed forbidden secrets. Soon the woman was in possession of certain weapons formerly in the man's care. Within the hour the priest had them.

'By treachery certain of the priestly caste manufactured atomic weapons, using the stolen one as pattern. A plot was hatched whereby certain of the

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Gardeners were invited to a temple for celebrations and thanksgiving. Here, in the sacred grounds, the Gardeners were poisoned. Their equipment was stolen. A great assault was made on the other Gardeners. In the battle the atomic pile of a grounded spacecraft was exploded by a priest. The whole world shook. The great continent of Atlantis sank beneath the waves. In far-off lands tornadoes rent the mountains and tore humans apart. Great waves stormed in from the seas, and the world became almost barren of human life. Barren save for a few who cowered whimpering with terror in remote caves.

'For years the Earth shook and shivered with the effects of the atomic blast. For years no Gardener came to inspect the world. Radiation was strong, and the scared remnants of humanity brought forth mutated progeny. Plant life was affected, and the atmosphere became debased. The sun was obscured by lowering red clouds. At long last the Wise Ones decreed that yet another expedition should travel to Earth and to take new stock to their desecrated "garden". The great Ark of humans, animals and plants set forth through the far reaches of space.'

The old hermit fell over with a gasp. The young monk leaped in the air with the shock and then hurried over to the fallen ancient. The little bottle of precious drops was at hand, and soon the old man was lying on his side breathing normally.

'You need food, Venerable One,' exclaimed the younger man. 'I will place water beside you and then I will climb to the Solemn Contemplation Hermitage to obtain tea and barley. I will hurry.' The hermit nodded weakly and relaxed as the young monk placed a bowl of water beside him, and put the full water-can within easy reach. 'I will go by way of the cliff side,' he said as he hurried out of the cave.

Along the mountain foot he ran, gazing upwards for signs of the faint trail which led to the wider path far above. Here, two thousand feet higher, and six miles away, there was the hermitage wherein many dwelt. Food would be available for the asking, but the way was hard and the daylight even now was beginning to fail. Grimly the young monk lengthened his stride.

Acutely he stared at the rock face until at last he discerned the faint marks where once before he had climbed the mountain face. By the twisted, scrubby bush he turned sharp right and immediately encountered the cruel, knife-like stones which discouraged so many others and led them to take a path which increased the six miles to more than twenty, so devious was the way.

Slowly he struggled upwards, seeking handholds where none seemed possible. Foot by foot he ascended. The sun sank below the far mountain range

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and he rested awhile sitting astride a boulder. Soon the first silver rays of the rising moon peeped over the mountain range. Soon the cliff face above was illumined sufficiently to make further travel possible. Clawing and digging in fingers and toes he inched his way perilously upwards. Below him the valley was in deep shadow. With a gasp of relief he reached up and tumbled on to the narrow track leading to the hermitage. Half running, breath coming in sobs, and aching in every limb, he made his way the remaining miles.

Feebly gleaming in the distance, the flickering butter lamp shone as a beacon of hope to the benighted traveler. Gasping for breath, and faint with the need for food, the young man stumbled the last few yards to the hermitage door. From inside came the mumbling chant of an aged man clearly praying entirely by rote. Here is no religious devotee whom I might disturb, thought the young monk as he called out loudly, 'Caretaker of hermits, I am in need!' The low, reiterated mumbling ceased. There was the creak of aged bones moving more quickly, and then the door slowly opened. Blackly outlined against a solitary butter lamp which flared and sputtered in the sudden draft, the old priest-caretaker with high-raised voice demanded, 'Who is there? Who are you that calls at this hour of the night?' Slowly the young monk moved so that he could be seen. The caretaker relaxed at the sight of the red robe. 'Come, enter,' he bade.

The young man stepped hesitantly forward. Reaction set in and he was tired. 'Fellow priest,' he said, 'the Venerable Hermit with whom I am staying is ill and we have no food. We had none today, nor yesterday. No trader has come to us. We have only the lake water. Can you give us food?'

The priest-caretaker clucked with sympathy. 'Food? Yes, of a surety I can give you food. Barley - already well ground. A brick of tea. Butter and sugar, yes, but you must rest tonight, you CANNOT traverse the mountain path tonight.'

'I must, fellow priest,' exclaimed the young monk. 'The Venerable One starves. The Buddha will protect me.'

'Then stay awhile and eat a little and drink tea - it is all ready. Eat and drink, and I will pack a shoulder bag for you. I have plenty.'

So it was that the young man sat in the lotus position and gave prostrations in thanks for the welcome so sincerely given. He sat and ate tsampa and drank strong tea, while the old caretaker babbled all the gossip and news which the well-served hermitage had heard. The Inmost One was atravel. The great Lord Abbot of Drepung had made disparaging remarks about another. The College of Proctors were giving thanks to a Guardian Cat who had located a

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persistent thief among certain traders. A Chinese had been waylaid on a mountain pass and in trying to escape - so it was said - had slipped over the edge to fall some two thousand feet (the body was all broken up and ready for the vultures without any further human aid).

But time was not standing still. At last, reluctantly, the young monk stood and took the proffered bag. With words of thanks and farewell he strode out of the hermitage and made his cautious way down the path. The moon was now high. The light was silvery and brilliant. The path was clear, but the shadows were of the intense blackness known only to those who dwell in high places. Soon he came to the edge where he must leave the more secure way and clamber down the precipice.

Cautiously, slowly, he lowered himself over the edge. With infinite care, somewhat handicapped by the weight on his shoulders, he crept downwards, inch by inch, foot by foot.

Carefully holding with his hands while he felt for a secure hold with his feet. Transferring his weight from his hands to his feet -from his feet to his hands. At last, with the moon declining overhead, he reached the darkened floor of the valley. Feeling his way from rock to rock he progressed slowly until before him he saw the red glow of the fire before the cave entrance. Stopping only to put on a few more branches, he tottered inside and sank down at the feet of the old hermit whom he could just see by the light of the fire reflecting into the cave entrance.

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CHAPTER TEN

THE old hermit improved visibly under the influence of hot tea, with a pat of butter and a good helping of sugar. The barley was finely ground, and well roasted. The flames from the fire shone cheerfully through the entrance to the cave. But the hour was still that between dusk and dawn, with the birds asleep in the branches and naught but the night creatures astir.

The moon had sailed across the sky and was now lowering herself beyond the farthest range. From time to time the chill wind of the night came rustling through the leaves to send the sparks aflying from the brightened fire.

The ancient man rose warily on stiffened limbs and tottered off into the inner chamber. The young monk rolled over and fell into a sound sleep before his head touched the hard-packed sand. The world about was silent. The night became darker with the darkness that foretells of the dawn soon to come. From above a solitary stone came rattling down to shatter on the boulders beneath, then all was silent again.

The sun was well advanced when the young monk awakened to a world of aches. Stiff limbs, tired muscles, and HUNGER! Muttering forbidden words under his breath he clambered to his feet, grabbed the empty water-can and lurched out of the cave. The fire was a pleasant glow of red ashes. Hastily he tossed on small twigs and laid larger branches on top. Ruefully he surveyed the fast-diminishing supply of wood. Gloomily he contemplated the difficulty of obtaining fresh supplies from ever and ever further afield. Glancing up at the rock face he shuddered involuntarily, as he contemplated his climb of the night. Then - off to the lake for water.

'We must talk long today,' said the old hermit as they finished their meager breakfast, 'for I feel the Heavenly Fields calling upon me to hurry. There is a limit to what flesh can endure and I have far outlived man's allotted span.'

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The young man looked sad, he had developed a deep affection and respect for the old one and considered that his suffering had been far too great. 'I am ready when you are, Venerable One,' he said, 'let me just fill your bowl with water first.' Rising, he swilled out the bowl and refilled it with fresh water.

The old hermit commenced, 'The Ark appeared in the screen before me vast and cumbersome. A vessel which would have engulfed the Potala and the whole of the City of Lhasa complete with Sera and Drepung Lamaseries. It bulked so huge that the humans streaming from it were by comparison as small as the ants which work in the sand. Vast animals were unloaded, and crowds of new humans. All appeared dazed, doped, presumably so that they should not fight. Men with strange things on their shoulders flew about as the birds fly, herding the animals and men, prodding them with rods made of metal.'

'Around the world the ship flew, landing at many points to leave behind animals of different types. Humans who were white, those who were black, and some were yellow. Short humans, tall humans. Humans with black hair and those whose hair was white. Animals with stripes, animals with long necks, some with no necks, never had I known there could be such a range of colours, sizes, and different types of living creatures. Some of the sea creatures were so utterly immense that I could not for a time comprehend how they could move, yet in the sea they appeared as agile as the fishes in our lakes.'

'Constantly through the air there flew small vessels which had in them people who were keeping check on the new inhabitants of Earth. On their forays they dispersed large herds and made sure that animals and humans were spread over the globe. The centuries passed and Man still was not able to light a fire nor even to shape crude implements of stone. The Wise Ones held conferences and decided that the "stock" must be improved by introducing some humanoids who were more intelligent, who knew how to light fires and work flint. So the centuries went on with the Gardeners of the Earth introducing fresh, virile specimens to improve the human stock. Gradually mankind progressed from the flint-chipping stage to the fire-light-in level. Gradually houses were built and towns formed. Always the Gardeners moved among the human creatures and the humans looked upon them as gods upon the Earth.'

'The Voice broke in, saying "No useful purpose would be served in merely following the endless troubles which beset this new colony of Earth. I will tell you of the salient features for the sake of your own instruction. While I speak we will have before us suitably phased pictures so that you may also see any point of note."

' "The Empire was great, but there came from another universe violent people who tried to wrest our possessions from us. These people were human-

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oid and upon their head they had horny growths projecting from the area of the temples. They also had a tail. These people were of a surpassingly warlike nature, it was their sport as well as their work. In black ships they poured into this universe and laid waste to worlds which we had so recently seeded. In space cataclysmic battles took place. Worlds were laid desolate, worlds erupted into gouts of smoke and flame and their debris clutters the spaceways as the Asteroid Belt even to this day. Previously fertile worlds had their atmosphere blasted away and all that lived there perished: A world struck another world a glancing blow and threw it against the Earth. The Earth juddered and shook and was pushed into another orbit which made the Earth-day longer.

‘ “During the near-collision giant electric discharges leaped from the two worlds. The skies flamed anew. Many of the Earth-humans perished. Great floods swept the surface of the world and compassionate Gardeners hurried around in their Arks trying to load aboard humans and animals that they should be safely conveyed to higher ground and safety. In later years,” said the Voice, “this would give rise to incorrect legends throughout all Earth lands. But in space the battle was won. The forces of the Empire defeated the evil invaders and made many of them captive.

‘ “The Prince of the Invaders, Prince Satan, pled for his life, saying that he had much to teach the peoples of the Empire. Saying that He would at all times work for the good of others. His life and that of some of his leading men was spared. After a period of captivity he expressed himself as anxious to co-operate in the rebuilding of the solar system which he had so desecrated. Being men of good will, the Empire admirals and generals could not imagine treachery and evil intent in others. They accepted the offer and set the Prince Satan and his officers tasks under the supervision of Empire men.

‘ “On the Earth the natives were crazed by the experiences they had undergone. They had been decimated by the inundation and by the flames from the clouds. Fresh stock was brought from outlying planets where some humans had survived. The lands were now different, the seas were different. Through the complete change in orbit the climate had altered. Now there was a hot equatorial belt and ice formed very heavily on the polar areas. Icebergs broke away from the main masses and floated in the seas. Huge animals died in the sudden cold. Forests collapsed when their living conditions changed so drastically.

‘ “Very slowly conditions became stabilized. Once again Man started to build a form of civilization. But Man was now excessively warlike and persecuted all those who were weaker. Routinely the Gardeners introduced fresh specimens that the basic stock should be improved. The evolution of Man pro-

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gressed and a better type of creature slowly emerged. But the Gardeners were not satisfied. It was decided that more Gardeners should live upon the Earth. Gardeners, and their families. For convenience mountain tops or high places were used as bases. Over an eastern land a man and a woman descended in their space ship and made their base on a pleasant mountain rise. Izanagi and Izanami became the protectors and founders of the Japanese race and" - the Voice sounded both rueful and cross at the same time - "once again false legends were woven; because these two, Izanagi and Izanami, appeared from the direction of the sun, the natives believed they were the sun god and goddess come to live among them."

'On the screen before me I saw the blood red sun shining full in the sky. As from it there descended a shining vessel colored red by the reflected rays of the setting sun. The ship descended further, hovered and then lazily circled around. At last, as red rays from the evening sun were reflected on the snow-covered mountain top the ship descended on to a level slope high on the mountain side. The last beams of sunlight lit up the man and woman who descended from the ship to look about them, and then to re-enter. The yellow skinned natives lying prostrate before the ship, overawed by the glory of the sight, waited in respectful silence and then melted away in the darkness of the night.

'The picture changed and I saw another mountain in a far-off land. Where, I knew not, but that information was soon to be given to me. From the sky there came spaceships which circled about and then slowly descended in a regular formation until they too occupied a mountain slope. "The Gods of Olympus!" said the Voice in a sarcastic tone. "The so-called Gods who brought much trial and tribulation to this young world. These people, with the former Prince Satan among them, came to settle upon the Earth, but the Centre of the Empire was far away. Ennui and the promptings of Satan led astray these young men and women who had been given this Earth assignment that they could gain experience.

' "Zeus, Apollo, Theseus, Aphrodite, the daughters of Cadmus, and many others, formed these crews. The messenger Mercury sped from ship to ship throughout the world carrying messages - and scandals. Men became overwhelmed with desire for the wives of others. Women set themselves to trap men they desired. Across the skies of the world there were mad chases in speeding craft as woman chased man or husband chased eloping wives. And the ignorant natives of the world, watching the sex antics of those whom they deemed to be gods, thought that THIS was the way in which THEY should live. So there began an era of debauchery in which all the laws of decency were flouted.

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“Various wily natives, more alert than the average, set themselves up as priests and pretended to be the Voice of the Gods. The ‘Gods’ were too busy with their orgies to even know. But these orgies led to other excesses, led to murders so numerous that at long last news of them filtered back to the Empire. But the native-priests, those who pretended to be the representatives of the Gods, wrote down all that happened and altered sayings that their own powers might be increased. Ever it has been thus in the history of the world, that some of the natives wrote down not what happened, but that which would enhance their own power and prestige. Most of the legends are not even an approximation of that which really took place.”

I was moved to another screen. Here were another group of Gardeners, or “Gods”. Horus, Osirus, Annubis, Isis, and many others. Here too orgies were occurring. Here too a former lieutenant of Prince Satan was at work trying to sabotage all efforts to produce good for this little world. Here too were the inevitable priests writing their endless and inaccurate legends: Some there were who had wormed their way into the confidence of the Gods and had so obtained knowledge normally forbidden to the natives for their own good. These natives formed a secret society designed to steal more forbidden knowledge and to usurp the power of the Gardeners. But the Voice continued to speak. “We had much trouble with certain of the natives and had to introduce measures which were repressive. Certain of the native priests, having stolen equipment from the Gardeners, could not control them; they loosed plagues upon the Earth. Vast numbers of the people died. Crops were affected.

“But certain of the Gardeners, under the control of Prince Satan, had established a Capital of Sin in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Cities in which any form of vice or perversion or depravity was considered as virtue. The Master of the Empire solemnly warned Satan to desist and leave, but he scoffed. Certain of the better inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were advised to leave, and then, at the appointed time, a solitary craft sped through the air and dropped a small package: The cities were erased in flame and smoke. Great mushroom-shaped clouds ascended into the quaking sky, and upon the ground there was naught but devastation, rubble of stones, melted rocks, and the incredible debris of human habitation in decay. By night the area shone with a sickly purple radiance. Very few escaped the holocaust.

“Following this salutary warning, it was decided to withdraw all the Gardeners from the face of the Earth and to have no more contact with the natives but to treat them as specimens from afar. Patrols would still enter the atmosphere. The world and its natives still would be supervised. But no official contact. Instead it was decided to have upon the Earth natives who had been specially trained and who could be ‘planted’ where suitable people could find

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them. The man who later became known as Moses was an example. A suitable native woman was removed from the Earth and impregnated with the seed having the necessary characteristics. The unborn child was telepathically trained and given great - for a native - knowledge. He was hypnotically conditioned not to reveal the knowledge until an appointed time.

‘ “In due course the baby was born and further training and conditioning was given. Later the baby was placed in a suitable container and under cover of darkness was deposited securely in a bed of reeds where he would speedily be found. As he grew to manhood he was in frequent touch with us. When necessary a small ship would come to a mountain and be concealed by the natural clouds or even by those which we made ourselves. The man Moses would then ascend the mountain and come aboard, leaving after with a Wand of Power or specially compiled Tablets of the Commandments which we had prepared for him.

‘ “But this still was not enough. We had to go through a similar procedure in other countries. In that land which now is known as India we specially controlled and trained the male child of a most powerful Prince. We considered that his power and prestige would induce the natives to follow him and adhere to a special form of discipline which we had formulated that there should be an improvement in the spiritual state of the natives. Gautama had his own ideas, however, and rather than discard him we allowed him to produce his own form of spiritual discipline. Once again we found that the disciples, or priests - usually for their own gain - distorted the teachings in their writings. Thus it ever was upon the Earth; a coterie of men, self-styled priests, would edit or rewrite scriptures that their own powers and wealth should be enhanced.

‘ “There were others who founded new branches of religion, such as Mohammed, Confucius - the names are too many to mention. But each of these men was under our control, or trained by us with the basic intention that a world belief should be established, the leaders of that religion would then lead their followers into GOOD ways of life. We intended that each human should behave to others as he himself would wish others to behave towards him. We tried to establish a state of universal harmony such as existed in our own Empire, but this new humanity was not yet sufficiently advanced to put aside Self and to work for the good of others.

‘ “The Wise Ones were very dissatisfied with progress. As a result of their cerebration a new scheme was propounded. One of the Wise Ones had remarked that all those sent to Earth so far had been introduced to the wealthier type of family. As he correctly stated, many of the lower classes would reject automatically the words of such a higher-class person. Thus it was that search

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was made, first using the Akashic Record, for a suitable woman to bear a son. A suitable woman from a suitable lower-class family and in a country wherein it was considered that a new religion or doctrine might be expected to flourish. Researchers assiduously devoted themselves to the task. A fair number of possibilities were presented. Three men and three women were secretly landed upon the Earth in order that they could pursue their investigations so that the most suitable family should be selected.

‘ ‘The consensus of opinion favoured a young woman who was childless and married to a practitioner of the oldest trade on Earth, the trade of carpenter. The Wise Ones reasoned that the majority of people were of this class and they may be more willing to follow the words of one of their own. So, the woman was visited by one of us whom she took to be an angel and told that she was to have a great honour. That she was to bear a male child who was to found a new religion. In the fullness of time the woman became pregnant but then occurred one of those events so common in that part of the world; the woman and her husband had to flee their home because of the persecution of a local king.

‘ ‘They made their slow way to a middle eastern city and there the woman found that her time was full upon her. There was no place to go except in a stable of a hostelry. There the baby was born. We had followed the flight, prepared to take all necessary action. Three members of the crew of the vigilant vessel descended to the surface of the Earth and made their way to the stable. To their dismay they learned that their ship had been seen and was described as a Star in the East.

‘ ‘The baby grew into boyhood, and through the special indoctrination he constantly received by telepathy, he showed great promise. As a youth he would dispute with his elders and regrettably he antagonized the local priesthood. In early manhood he withdrew from those he knew and traveled to many other lands in the middle and far east. We directed him to travel to Tibet, and he crossed the mountain range and sojourned for a time in the Cathedral of Lhasa, where even now prints of his hands are preserved. Here he received advice and assistance in the formulation of a religion suitable for western peoples.

‘ ‘During his stay in Lhasa he underwent special treatment in which the astral body of the Earth-human was freed and taken away to another existence. In its place was inserted the astral body of one of our choosing. This was a person with very great experience in spiritual matters - far greater experience than could be obtained under any Earth conditions. This system of transmigration is one we frequently employ when dealing with backward races. At last everything was ready, and he made the long journey back to his home-

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land. Arrived there, he was successful in recruiting certain acquaintances who would assist with the dissemination of the new religion.

‘ ‘Unfortunately, the first occupant of the body had antagonized the priests. Now they remembered the fact and carefully arranged an incident under which the man could be arrested. Having control of the judge who tried the matter the result was a foregone conclusion. We considered effecting a rescue, but came to the conclusion that the overall result would be bad for the general population and for the new religion.

‘ ‘The new form of spiritual discipline spread. But once again there were those who subverted it to their own ends. About sixty years after its inception a large convention was held in the middle east city of Constantinople. Here many priests foregathered. Many of them perverted men who had depraved sexual desires and who looked upon heterosexuality as unclean. Under their majority vote the real Teachings were altered and made women appear unclean. They now taught -quite erroneously - that all children are born in sin. They decided to publish a book about the events of sixty years before.

‘ ‘Writers were hired to compile books on the same lines using as far as possible the tales and legends which had been passed down (with all their inaccuracies) from person to person. For year after year various committees sat to edit, delete and alter passages which did not please them. Eventually a book was written which did NOT teach the real Belief, but which was in effect advertising material to enhance the power of the priesthood. Throughout the centuries which followed, the priests - who SHOULD have been assisting the development of Mankind - actively hindered it. False legends have been propagated, facts have been distorted. Unless the people of the Earth, and particularly the evil priests, change their ways, we, the People of the Empire, will have to take over the Earth world. Meantime, except in such extreme cases as this, we have orders not to converse with Man, and to make no overtures to any government on Earth.”

‘ The Voice ceased to speak. I floated numbly before those ever-changing screens watching the pictures as they brought to my vision all that had happened in those days of long ago. I saw, too, much of the probable future, for the future CAN be predicted fairly accurately for a world or even for a country. I saw my own dear land being invaded by the hated Chinese. I saw the rise - and fall - of an evil political regime which seemed to have a name like communism, but this meant nothing to me. At last I felt extreme exhaustion. I felt that even my astral body was wilting under the strain which had been placed upon it. The screens, hitherto so full of living color, turned grey. My vision blurred and I fell into a state of unconsciousness.

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'A horrid rocking motion awakened me from my sleep, or from the state of unconsciousness. I opened my eyes - but I HAD no eyes! Although I still could not move I was in some way aware that I was again in my physical body. The rocking was the table which bore me being carried back along the space vessel corridor. An unemotional voice flatly stated "he is conscious". A grunt of acknowledgement followed and there was silence again except for the shuffling of feet and the faint scraping of metal as at times my table was bumped against a wall.

'I lay alone in that metal room. The men had deposited my table and silently withdrawn. I lay pondering the marvels that had befallen me yet feeling a little resentful. The constant tirade about priests; I was a priest and they were glad enough to make use of my unwilling services. As I rested broodingly I heard the metal panel slide aside. A man entered and slid shut the door behind him.

'"Well, Monk," exclaimed the voice of the doctor, "you have done well. We are very proud of you. While you lay unconscious we examined again your brain and our instruments tell us that you have all the knowledge locked inside your brain cells. You have taught our young men and women much. Soon you will be released. Does that make you happy?"

'"Happy, Sir Doctor?" I queried. "What have I to be happy about? You capture me, you cut off the top of my head, you force my spirit out of my body, you insult me as a member of the priesthood, and now - having used me - you are going to discard me like a man casting off his tattered body at death. Happy? What have I to be happy about? Are you going to restore my eyes? Are you going to provide a living for me? How am I going to exist otherwise?" I almost SNARLED the latter!

'"One of the main troubles of the world, Monk," mused the doctor, "is that most of your people are negative. No one could say that you are negative. You positively say what you mean. If people would always think POSITIVELY there would be no trouble with the world, for the negative condition comes naturally to people here, although it actually takes more effort to be negative."

'"But Sir Doctor!" I exclaimed, "I asked what you were going to DO for me. How shall I live? What shall I DO? Do I just have to retain this knowledge until someone comes along who says HE is the man, and then babble everything like an old woman in the market place? And WHY do you think I will do my alleged tasks, thinking as you do about priests?"

'"Monk!" said the doctor, "we shall place you in a comfortable cave, with a nice stone floor. It will have a very small trickle of water which will sup-

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ply your needs in that direction. As for food, your priestly state will ensure that people BRING you food. Again, there are priests AND priests; your priests of Tibet are mainly good and we have no quarrel with them. Did you not observe that we have previously used the priests of Tibet? And you ask about him to whom you shall give your knowledge; remember this - you will KNOW when the person comes. Give your knowledge to him and to none other."

'So I lay there entirely at their mercy. But after many hours the doctor came in to my room again, saying, "Now you shall be restored to movement. First - we have a new robe for you and also a new bowl." Hands were busy by me. Strange things were plucked out of me. My sheet was removed and the new robe - a NEW one, the first NEW robe I had ever had - was placed about me. Then movement returned to me. Some male attendant placed an arm around my shoulders and eased me over the edge of the table. For the first time in an unknown number of days I again stood upon my feet.

'That night I rested more content, wrapped in a blanket which also had been given to me. And on the morrow I was taken, as I have already told you, and deposited in the cave where I have lived alone for more than sixty years. But now, before we rest for the night, let us have a little tea, for my task is at an end.'

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE young monk sat up abruptly, the nape of his neck bristling with fright. SOMETHING had brushed by him. SOMETHING had trailed icy fingers across his forehead. For long moments, he sat bolt upright straining his ears for even the slightest sign of a sound. Wide eyed and staring he strove in vain to pierce the utter blackness around him. Nothing moved. No vestige of noise made the slightest ripple on his consciousness. The entrance to the cave was a mere lighter-blackness vaguely etched on the entire lack of light engulfing the cave.

He held his breath, listening until he could hear the pounding of his own heart, and the faint creakings and wheezes from his own organs. No rustle of sound from wind-disturbed leaves cheered him. No creature of the night called. Silence. The absolute lack of noise which is known to but few, and to none in populated communities. Again light tendrils wandered across his head. With a squeak of fright, he leaped high into the air, his legs running even before he hit the ground.

Dashing out of the cave, perspiring with fright, he stooped hastily over the well-banked fire. Throwing aside the enclosing earth and sand he uncovered the red glow. Quickly he thrust in a well-dried branch and blew on the embers until it seemed his blood-vessels must burst under the strain. At last the wood burst into flame. Grasping it in one hand he hastily inserted another stick and waited for it too to flare into light. At last, with a burning brand in each hand he slowly reentered the cave. The flickering flames leaped and danced to his movements. His shadows were thrown grotesque and huge on either side of him.

Nervously he peered about. Anxiously he searched in the hope that it had been a spider's web trailing across him, but of that there was no sign. Then he thought of the old hermit and he berated himself for not thinking of him before. 'Venerable One!' he called tremulously, 'are you all right?' With strain-

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ing ears he listened, but there was no reply, not even an echo. Dubiously he made his slow, frightened way forward, with the two flaring branches thrust well before him. At the end of the cave he turned right, where he had not before entered, and uttered a pent-up gasp of relief as he saw the old man sitting in the lotus position at the far end of a smaller cave.

A strange flash - flash - flash caught his attention as he was about to silently withdraw. Staring hard he saw that water was emerging from a rocky protrusion as drop - drop - drop. Now the young monk was calmer. 'I am sorry I intruded, Venerable One,' he said, 'I feared you were ill. I will leave you.' But there was no reply. No movement. The old man sat as still as a stone statue. Apprehensively the young man advanced and then stood for a moment studying the motionless figure. At last, fearfully, he extended his arm and touched the old one on the shoulder. The spirit had withdrawn. Previously bedazzled by the flickering flames he had not thought about the aura. Now he perceived that that too had faded, gone out.

Sadly the young man sat cross-legged in front of the corpse and recited the age-old ritual for the dead. Giving instructions for the journeyings of the Spirit on the way to the Heavenly Fields. Warning of possible dangers laid before him in his confused state of mind by mischievous entities. At last, his religious obligations fulfilled, he slowly rose to his feet, bowed to the dead figure, and - the torches having long burned out - felt his way out of the cave.

The predawn wind was just rising and began moaning eerily through the trees. A wild keening came from a rocky fissure across which the wind was blowing and making a high organ note of dismal sound. Slowly the first faint streaks of light appeared in the morning sky and the far edge of the mountain range could now be distinguished. The young monk crouched miserably beside the fire, wondering what to do next, thinking of the grisly task before him. Time seemed to stand still. But at last, after what seemed to be an infinity of ages, the sun advanced and there was daylight. The young monk thrust a branch into the fire and waited patiently until the end burst into flames then, reluctantly he grasped the flaming brand and advanced with trembling legs into the cave and into the inner chamber.

The body of the old hermit was sitting as though he were still alive. Apprehensively the young monk bent and lifted the old body. Without much effort he raised it and draped it across his shoulders. Staggering a little he made his way out of the cave and along the side of the mountain where the big flat stone was waiting. The vultures were waiting too. Slowly the young man removed the robe from the wasted body and felt instant compassion at the sight of the skeleton-thin frame with the skin so tightly stretched. Shuddering with

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revulsion he jabbed the sharp-edged flint into the lower abdomen and pulled up hard.

The tearing gristle and fibrous muscle made a dreadful sound which alerted the vultures and brought them hopping nearer. With the body exposed and the body cavity gaping open the young man raised a heavy rock and brought it down upon the skull so that the brains came tumbling out. Then, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he picked up the old hermit's robe and bowl and trudged back to the cave, leaving the vultures quarrelling and fighting behind him. Into the fire he tossed the robe and bowl, watching as the flames so quickly consumed them.

Sadly, with tears plopping down to the thirsty earth, he turned away and trudged slowly down the path towards another phase of life.

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THE TIBETAN SAGE

FOREWORD

People hooted and jeered when, some few years ago, I wrote in *The Third Eye* that I had flown in kites. One would have thought that I had committed a great crime in saying that. But now—well, we look about and we can see people flying in kites. Some of them are high above the water being towed by a speed boat. Yet others are kites with a man aboard, he stands on the edge of a cliff or high piece of ground, and then he jumps off and he is actually flying in a kite. Nobody says now that Lobsang Rampa was right, but they certainly did hoot when I wrote about kite flying.

There have been quite a number of things which were 'science fiction' a few years ago, but now—well, now they are almost everyday occurrences. We can have a satellite in space, and in London we can pick up the television programs from the USA or from Japan. I predicted that.

We also now have had a man, or rather men, walking on the Moon. All my books are true, and they are gradually being proved true.

This book is not a novel. It is not science fiction. It is the absolutely unvarnished truth of what happened to me, and I again state that there is no author's license in the book. I say this book is true, but you may want to believe it to be science fiction or something like that. Well, fine, you are quite at liberty to have a good laugh and call it science fiction, and perhaps before you have actually finished reading the book some event will occur which will prove my books true. But I will tell you now that I will not answer any questions about this book. I have had such an enormous mail about the other books, and people do not even put in return postage and, with postal rates as they are at present, sometimes it takes more to reply to a reader's letter than he paid for the book in the first case.

Well, here is the book. I hope you like it. I hope you find it believable. If you do not find it believable it may be that you have not yet reached the necessary stage of evolution.

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THE TIBETAN SAGE

CHAPTER ONE

“Lobsang! LOBSANG!!” Dimly I seemed to swim up from the depths of a sleep of exhaustion. It had been a terrible day, but now-well, I was being called. Again the voice broke in, “Lobsang!” But I suddenly felt commotion about me, opened my eyes and thought the mountain was falling on top of me. A hand reached out and a quick jerk lifted me from my place of rest and swung me rapidly aside, barely in time, too, because a massive rock with sharp edges slid down behind me and ripped off my robe. Quickly I stumbled to my feet and in a half daze followed him to a little ledge at the far end of which was a very small hermitage.

About us rocks and snow came pelting down. Suddenly we saw the bent figure of the old hermit hurrying as fast as he could toward us. But no, a huge collection of rocks rolled down the mountain and swept away the hermitage and the hermit and the projecting rock on which the hermitage had stood. The rock was about two hundred feet in length, and it was swept away as a leaf is swept away in a gale.

My Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, was holding me firmly by the shoulders. About us was darkness, not a glimmer of starlight, no gleam of a flickering candle from the houses of Lhasa. Everything was dark.

Suddenly there was a fresh barrage of immense rocks and sand, snow, and ice. The ledge upon which we so precariously stood tipped toward the mountain, and we felt ourselves sliding, sliding, we seemed to be for ever sliding, and at last we came to a hearty bump. I think I blacked-out for a time because I suddenly came to my senses again thinking of the circumstances which had caused us to go to this very remote hermitage.

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We had been at the Potala playing with a telescope which had been given to the Dalai Lama as a goodwill present from an English gentleman. Suddenly I saw prayer flags waving high up on the mountain side, they seemed to be waving in some sort of a code. Quickly I passed the telescope to my Guide and pointed up to the waving flags.

He stood there with the telescope braced against the wall of the topmost level of the Potala. He stood there for some time staring, and then he said, "The hermit is in need of help, he is ill. Let us inform the Abbot and say that we are ready to go." Abruptly he closed the telescope and gave it to me to put back in the Dalai Lama's storeroom of special gifts.

I ran with the thing, being particularly careful not to trip and not to drop that telescope, the first I had ever seen. And then I went out and filled my pouch with barley, checked that my tinder were adequate, and then I just hung around waiting for the Lama Mingyar Dondup.

Soon he appeared with two bundles, one great heavy bundle which he had on his shoulders and a smaller bundle which he put on my shoulders. "We will go by horse to the foot of that mountain, and then we shall have to send the horses home and climb—climb. It will be quite a hard climb, too, I have done it before."

We got on our horses, and rode down the steps to where the Outer Ring of roads surrounds Lhasa. Soon we reached the turning off point and, as I always did, I took a quick look toward the left to the home where I had been born. But there was no time to think about it now, we were on a mission of mercy.

The horses began to labor, to pant and to snort. The climbing was too much for them, their feet kept slipping on the rocks. At last, with a sigh, the Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Well, Lobsang, the horses finish here. From now on we depend upon our own weary feet." We got off the horses and the Lama patted them and told them to return home. They turned about and trotted back along the path with renewed life at the thought of going home instead of having to climb further.

We rearranged our bundles and checked over our heavy sticks, any crack or flaw which had developed could prove fatal so we checked them, and checked the other things we were carrying. We had our flint and our tinder, we had our food supply, and so at last with- out a backward look we started climbing, climbing up the hard, hard mountain rock. It seemed to be made of glass, it was so hard and so slippery. We put our fingers and our toes in any little crevice and gradually, barking our shins and scraping our hands, we made

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our way up to a ledge. Here we stopped for a time to regain our breath and our strength. A little stream came from a crevice in the rock so we had a drink, and then we made some tsampa. It was not very savory, it had to be made with cold, cold water, there was no room on the ledge for fire-making. But with our tsampa and a drink we felt refreshed again and discussed which way we should climb. The surface was smooth, and it seemed impossible that anyone could ever climb up that face, but we set to as had others before us. Gradually we inched upwards, upwards, gradually the tiny speck which had been visible to us became larger and larger until we could see individual rocks which formed the hermitage.

The hermitage was perched on the very end of a rocky spur which stood out from the side of the mountain. We climbed up under it, and then with immense effort we reached the side of the spur where we sat for several moments gasping for breath because here we were high above the Plain of Lhasa and the air was rarified and bitterly cold. At last we felt able to stand again, and we made our way much more easily this time until we reached the entrance of the hermitage. The old hermit came to the door. I peered inside and I was absolutely amazed by the smallness of the room. Actually, there would not be room for three people so I resigned myself to staying outside. The Lama Mingyar Dondup nodded his approval, and I turned away as the door closed behind him.

Nature has to be attended to at all times, and some-times Nature can be very pressing indeed, so I wandered around looking for "sanitary facilities". And, yes, right on the edge of that jutting rock there was a flat rock projecting even further out. It had a convenient hole in it which I could see had been man-made or man-enlarged. As I crouched down over that hole I could find a solution to something that had been puzzling me; on our way up we had passed a peculiar looking heap and what seemed to be yellowish shards of ice, some of them looked like yellowish ice rods. Now I was sure that those very puzzling mounds were evidence that men had lived in the hermitage for some time, and I gleefully added my own contribution.

That taken care of I wandered around and found the rock to be excessively slippery. But I walked along the path and came to what was obviously a moving rock. It was in the form of a ledge, and I wondered without any real interest why there should be a ledge of rock in that particular position. Being inquisitive I examined the rock with more than usual care, and I found my interest mounting because clearly it was man-made, and yet how could it be man-made? It was in such a strange position. So I just gave a desultory kick to the rock forgetting that I was barefooted, so I nursed my injured toes for a few moments and then turned away from the ledge to examine the opposite side,

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the side up which we had climbed.

It was absolutely amazing and almost unbelievable to think that we had climbed up that sheer face. It looked like a sheet of polished rock as I gazed down, and I felt definitely queasy at the thought of climbing down.

I reached down to feel for my tinder box and flint, and jerked to full awareness of my immediate situation. Here I was somewhere inside a mountain without a stitch of clothing, without the vital barley and bowl and tinder and flint. I must have muttered some unBuddhistlike exclamation because I heard a whisper, "Lobsang, Lobsang, are you all right?"

Ah? My Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup was with me. Immediately I felt reassured, and replied, "Yes, I am here, I think I was knocked out when I fell, and I have lost my robe and all my possessions, and I haven't got the vaguest idea where we are or how we are going to get out. We need some light to see what can be done about your legs."

He said, "I know this passage very well indeed. The old hermit was the keeper of great secrets of the past and of the future. Here is the history of the world from the time it started until the time it ends." He rested for a few moments and then said, "If you feel along the left hand wall you will come to a ridge. Now if you push hard against that ridge it will slide back and give access to a big recess which has spare robes and ample barley. The first thing for you to do is to open the closet and feel for tinder and flint and candles. You will find them on the third shelf from the bottom. If we have light we can know how we can help each other." I carefully gazed along the left side of the Lama and then I touched the left hand wall of the passageway. It seemed to be a fruitless search, the wall was as smooth as could be, as smooth as if it had been made by human hands.

Just as I was about to give up I felt a sharp piece of rock. Actually I thumped my knuckles against it and it knocked off a piece of skin, but I pushed and pushed until I thought I would be unable to find the goods in the closet. With an extra special effort, and the rock slid sideways with a terrifying screech. Yes, there was a closet all right, and I could feel the shelves. First I concentrated on the third shelf from the bottom. Here there were butter lamps, and I located the flint and the tinder. The tinder was the driest stuff I had ever used and immediately it flared into flame. I lit the wick of a candle before very quickly extinguishing the tinder which was already reaching to burn my fingers.

"Two candles, Lobsang, one for you and one for me. There is an ample supply there, enough, if necessary, to last us a week." The Lama lapsed into silence, and I looked around to see what there was in the closet that we could

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use, and I saw a stave made of metal, iron it seemed to be, and I found I could hardly lift it. But it seemed to me that with a stave like that we might prise the rock off his legs, so I walked back with a candle and told the Lama what I was going to do. Then I went back for that metal bar. It seemed to me that it was the only means of freeing my Guide and friend from the grip of that boulder.

When I reached the boulder I put down the metal bar and went on hands and knees trying to find how I could obtain leverage. There were plenty of rocks about, but I doubted my own strength, I could hardly lift that bar as it was, but eventually I worked out a scheme; if, I gave the Lama one of the staves he could perhaps push a rock under the boulder if I could elevate the thing a bit. He agreed with me that it might be possible, and he said, "It is the only thing we can do, Lobsang, because if I can't get free of this boulder here my bones will stay, so let's get busy with it now."

I found a fairly square piece of rock, it was about four hands in thickness. I put it right down against the boulder and then gave a wooden stave to the Lama for him to try with his part of the proceedings. We decided that, yes, if I could lift the boulder the victim should be able to push the square rock in under and that would give us enough room to get his legs out.

I pored over the boulder where it rested on the ground to see if there was any place where I could safely insert the bar. At last I found such a place, and I rammed the claw end in as far as I could under the boulder. It was a simple matter then to hunt around and find another boulder which I could put under the bar near the claw end.

"Ready," I yelled nearly stunning myself with the strength, with all my weight on the iron bar. No, it did not move, I was not strong enough, so I rested a moment or two and then I looked around for the heaviest rock that I could lift. Having found it I lifted it and carried it to the iron bar. There I balanced it on the extreme end of the bar and put all my weight on top of it, at the same time holding it from falling off the bar. To my delight there was a little hesitation and a little jerk, and slowly the bar moved down to ground level.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup called out, "It's all right, Lobsang, I've got the block underneath and you can release the bar now, we can get my legs out."

I was overjoyed, and moved back to the other side of the boulder, and yes, it was off the Lama's legs, but the legs were raw and bleeding, and we feared that they were broken. Very, very gingerly we tried to move his legs, and he could move them so I got down and crawled under the boulder until I reached his feet. Then I suggested that he should lift himself up with his el-

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bows and try to move backwards while I pushed on the soles of his feet. Gingerly, very gingerly, I pushed on the bottoms of his feet and it was obvious that, while the skin and flesh lacerations were severe, there were no broken bones.

The Lama kept trying to pull himself out from under the boulder. It was very difficult, and I had to push with all my strength against his feet and twist his legs a bit to avoid an outcrop of stone under the boulder. The outcrop, I surmised, was the only thing that had saved his legs from being absolutely squashed, and it was still giving us trouble. But at last, with more than a sigh of relief, his legs were quite clear and I crawled under the boulder to help him to sit on a ledge of rock. Two little candles were not much to go by so I went back to that stone closet and got half a dozen more with a sort of basket in which to carry the things.

We lit all the candles and examined the legs very carefully; they were literally in shreds. From the thighs to the knees they were badly abraded, from the knees to the feet the flesh was flapping because it had been cut into strips.

The Lama told me to go back and get some rags which were in a box, and he told me also to bring a jar with some paste in it. He described it exactly, and I went back to get the jar, the rags, and a few other things. The Lama Mingyar Dondup brightened up considerably when he saw that I had brought disinfecting lotion as well. I washed his legs from the hips down, and then at his suggestion I pushed the flapping strips of flesh back into place covering the bones—the leg bones had been showing very, very clearly, so I covered them with the flesh and then “glued” the flesh in position with the ointment stuff which I had brought. After about half an hour the ointment was almost dry and it looked as if the legs were in firm casts.

I tore some of the rags into strips and wound them around his legs to help keep the “plaster” in place. Then I took all the things back to the stone closet with the exception of our candles, eight in all. We blew out six and carried the others inside our robes.

I picked up our two wooden staves and gave them to the Lama who accepted them gratefully. Then I said, “I will move around to the other side of the boulder and then I shall be able to see how we are going to manage to get you out.”

The Lama smiled and said, “I know all about this place, Lobsang, it has been here about a million years, and it was made by the people who first populated this country of ours. Provided no rocks have shifted and blocked the way we shall be safe enough for a week or two.”

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He nodded toward the direction of the outside world and said, "I think it is unlikely that we shall be able to get out that way, and if we cannot get out through one of the volcanic vents then some later explorers, in a thousand years or so, may find two interesting skeletons upon which to ponder."

I moved forward passing the tremendous side of the tunnel and the side of the boulder, and it was such a tight fit that I wondered how the Lama was going to get through. Still, I thought, where there is a will there is a way, and I came to the conclusion that if I crouched at the bottom of the boulder the Lama could walk over me and he would be that much higher up and so his legs and hips would get past the biggest bulge in the boulder. When I suggested it he was very, very reluctant, saying he was far too heavy for me, but after a few painful tries he came to the conclusion that there was just not any other way. So I piled a few small rocks around about the boulder so that I would have a fairly flat bed on which to crouch, and then, when I got down on my hands and knees, I told the Lama that I was ready. Very quickly he put one foot on my right hip and the other foot on my left shoulder, and with a quick movement he was through—past the boulder and on to clear ground the other side. I stood up and I saw that he was perspiring terribly with the pain and the fear that he might harm me.

We sat down for a few moments to regain our breath and our strength. We couldn't have any tsampa as our bowls had been lost, and so had our barley, but I remembered seeing such things in the stone closet. Once more I made a trip to the wall and raked through the wooden bowls that were there, picking the best one for the Lama and the next best one for myself. Then I gave them both a good scouring with fine sand which was so plentiful in that tunnel.

The two bowls I put on a shelf side by side, and then I put in a quite adequate amount of barley from the store kept in the closet. After that there was merely the task of lighting a small fire—there was flint and tinder in the closet, and firewood too—and then, with a hunk of butter which was in the closet, we mixed up the gooey mess which we called tsampa. Without a word we sat down and ate that little meal. Soon after we both felt much better and able to continue.

I checked our supplies, now replenished from that store closet, and, yes, we had a bowl each, tinder and flint, and a bag of barley each, and that really was all we possessed in the world except for the two stout wooden staves.

Once again we set out, battered and bruised, and after what seemed walking for eternity we came to a stone right across the path, the end of the tunnel, or so I thought. But the Lama said, "No, no, this isn't the end, push on the bottom of that big slab and it will tilt from the middle, and then if we stoop we

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can get through." I pushed on the bottom as instructed, and with an awful screech the slab moved to a horizontal position and remained in that position. I held it for safety while the Lama painfully crawled under, and then I pushed the slab down again into its correct place.

Darkness, painful darkness which was made to appear even darker by the two little guttering candles. The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Put out your candle, Lobsang, and I will put out mine, and then we will see the daylight "

"See the daylight!" I thought that his experiences and the pain he must be suffering from had given him hallucinations, however I blew out my candle and for some time could smell the smoking wick which had been saturated with rancid butter.

The Lama said, "Now just wait a few moments and we shall have all the light we want." I stood there feeling an absolute fool, standing in what was now perfect darkness, not a glimmer of light from any- where. I could have called it a "sounding darkness" because there seemed to be thump, thump, thump, squeeze, but that was dismissed from my mind as I saw what appeared to be a sunrise. Over at one side of what was apparently a room a glowing ball appeared. It was red and looked like red hot metal. Quickly the red faded into yellow and on to white, the white-blue of daylight. Soon everything was revealed in stark reality. I stood there with my mouth open marveling at what I saw. The room, or whatever it was, occupied a greater space than did the Potala, the Potala could have been put into that room. The light was brilliant, and I was almost hypnotized by the decorations on the walls and by the strange things which littered the floor space without getting in one's way when one walked.

"An amazing place, eh, Lobsang? This was made more years ago than the mind of Man can comprehend. It used to be the headquarters of a special Race who could do space travel and just about everything else. Through millions of years it still works, everything is intact. Certain of us were known as the Guardians of the Inner Temple; this is the Inner Temple."

I walked over to examine the closest wall, and it appeared to be covered with writing of some sort, writing which I instinctively felt was not the writing of any race on Earth. The Lama picked up my thoughts by telepathy and replied, "Yes, this was built by the Race of Gardeners who brought humans and animals to this world."

He stopped speaking and pointed out a box set against a wall a little distance away. He said, "Will you go over there to that closet and fetch me two pieces of stick with a short piece across the top?" Obediently I walked across

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to the closet which he had pointed out.

The door opened easily and I was absolutely fascinated by the contents. It seemed to be full of things for medical usage. In one corner there were a number of these sticks with the bars across one end. I picked out two, and saw that they would be able to support a man. I had no name such as crutches in those days, but I took two back to the Lama and he immediately put the short bars under his armpits, and about half way between the top and the bottom there was a sort of rod sticking out. The Lama Mingyar Dondup grasped these rods and said, "There you are, Lobsang, these things help the cripples to walk. Now I am going across to that closet and I can put proper casts on my legs, and then I shall be able to get about as usual while the flesh heals and while the bruises depart from the bones."

He walked over, and being naturally inquisitive I walked beside him. He said, "Fetch our staves and we will put them in this corner so that we can have them when we need them." He turned away from me and continued his poking about in the closet. I turned away, too, and went and picked up our staves and took them back to rest against the corner of that closet.

"Lobsang, Lobsang, do you think you could drag in our bundles and that steel bar? It is not iron, as you think, but something very much harder and stronger, and it is called steel." I turned once again and went to that slab through which we had entered. I pushed against the top of the thing and it swung to remain horizontal and motionless. It was no trouble for me to duck under the stone which I left in its horizontal position. The light was a blessing, it was a very real blessing because it shone quite a way down that tunnel and I could see my way past the side of the tunnel and the big boulder which had caused us so much trouble.

Our bundles with all our possessions were on the opposite side, so with difficulty I got past the boulder and reached for the pouches. They seemed to be shockingly heavy, and I put it down to our weakened state through lack of food. First I took the two pouches back and left them just inside the doorway, and then I went back for the steel bar. I could hardly lift the thing, it made me pant and grunt like an old man, so I let one end drop while I held firmly to the other, and I found that by walking backwards and pulling on the steel bar with both hands I could just manage to make it move. It took me quite a time to get it around the boulder, but after that it was fairly easy going.

Now I had to push the bundles under the slab and into that immense room, and then I got the steel bar and decided I had never moved such a heavy weight in my life before. I maneuvered it into the room and then pushed down the slab of door so that once again we had a smooth wall without an opening.

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The Lama Mingyar Dondup had not wasted his time. Now his legs were encased in shiny metal, and once again he looked perfectly fit. "Lobsang, let us have a meal before we look round because we shall be here about a week. While you were fetching these things," he pointed to the bundles and the steel rod, "I have been in telepathic communication with a friend at the Potala, and he tells me a terrific gale is raging. He advised me to stay where we are until the gale has abated. The weather prophets said the storm would rage for about a week." I felt really gloomy about it because I was sick of this tunnel and not even the room could interest me much. In spite of the size of the room I was feeling a certain amount of claustrophobia which sounds impossible but was not. I felt like an animal in a cage. However, the pangs of hunger were stronger than any fears, and I watched with pleasure as the Lama made our meal. He made it better than anyone, I thought, and it was so nice to sit down to a hot meal.

I took a mouthful of the stuff, which really is a polite name for tsampa, and marveled at the flavor of it. It was a very pleasant flavor indeed, and I felt my strength coming back and my gloom disappearing. After I finished my bowlful the Lama said, "Have you had enough, Lobsang? You can have as much as you wish, there is plenty of food here, enough, in fact, to feed a small lama-sery. I'll tell you about it sometime, but now—would you like some more?"

"Oh, thank you!" I replied. "I certainly could do with a little more, and that has such a pleasant taste to it. I have never tasted anything like that before."

The Lama chuckled as he turned away to get me more food, and then he actually burst out into a laugh.

"Look, Lobsang," he said, "look at this bottle. It is best brandy kept entirely for medical purposes. I think that we can consider our incarceration here as warranting a little brandy to give flavor to the tsampa."

I took the bowl that he proffered to me and sniffed it appreciatively, but at the same time dubiously because I had always been taught that these intoxicating liquors were the works of the Devils, and now I was being encouraged to taste it. Never mind, I thought, its good stuff when one doesn't feel too fresh.

I set to and soon got in an awful mess. We had only our fingers, you know,—nothing like a knife, fork or spoon, not even chopsticks, but fingers, and after meals we used to wash our hands with fine sand which would take off tsampa with wonderful efficiency besides at times taking off a bit of skin if one was too energetic.

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I scooped out tsampa, not with my fingers alone but I brought the palm of my right hand into play, and then suddenly—quite without warning I fell over backwards. I like to say that I fell asleep through overtiredness, but the Lama said I was dead drunk when he laughingly told the Abbot about it later. Drunk or not, I slept and slept and slept, and still when I awakened that wonderful golden light suffused the room. I gazed up at—well, I suppose it was the ceiling, but the ceiling was so far up I could not tell where it was. It was truly an immense room, as if the whole wretched mountain was hollow.

“Sunlight, Lobsang, sunlight, and it will work twenty-four hours a day. The light it gives is absolutely without heat, it is precisely the same temperature as the air around us. Don’t you think it is better to have light like this than smelly, smoking candles?”

I looked about again and just could not see how there could be sunlight when we were entombed in a rock room, and I said as much. The Lama replied, “Yes, this is a marvel of marvels, I have known it all my life, but no one knows how it works. Cold light is a miraculous invention, and this was invented or discovered a million or so years ago. They developed a method of storing sunlight, and making it available even on the darkest nights. There is none of it in the city nor in the temple because we just do not know how to make it. This is the only place I know where there is this type of lighting.”

“A million or so, you said. That is almost beyond my comprehension. I think it is a figure like a one or a two or a three, or something like that, followed by a number of noughts, six I think it is, but that’s only a guess, and in any case it is so vast a number that I can’t realize it. It doesn’t count for anything for me. Ten years, twenty years, yes I can relate to that, but longer—no.

“How was this room made?” I asked as I trailed my fingers idly over some inscription on the wall. I jumped back in fright as a certain click occurred and a part of the wall slid back.

“Lobsang! Lobsang! You have made a discovery. None of us who have been here knew there was another room attached to this.” Cautiously we peered into the open doorway, and as soon as our heads passed the doorpost the light came on and I noted that as we left the first great room the light faded at our absence. We looked about almost afraid to move because we did not know what perils there were or what traps we might fall into, but eventually we plucked up courage and walked over to a great “something” standing in the middle of the floor. It was a tremendous structure.

Once it had been shiny, but now it had a dull grey glaze. It was about four or five men tall, and it looked something like two dishes, one on top of the

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other. We walked around and there at the far side we saw a grey metal ladder extending down from a doorway in the machine to the floor. I ran forward forgetting that as a young man in Holy Orders I should show more decorum, but I ran forward and hastily climbed the ladder without even bothering to see if it was safely fixed. It was. Once again as my head blocked the doorway lights came on inside the machine. The Lama Mingyar Dondup, not to be outdone, climbed up into the interior of the machine and said, "Ah, Lobsang, this is one of the Chariots of the Gods. You've seen them flitting about, haven't you?"

"Oh yes, sir," I replied. "I thought there were Gods traversing our Land to see that everything was all right, but, of course, I have never seen one as close as this before."

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CHAPTER TWO

We looked about us and we seemed to be in a sort of corridor lined on both sides with lockers or closets, or something similar. Anyway, I pulled experimentally on a handle and a big drawer slid out as smoothly as if it had just been made. Inside there were all manner of strange devices. The Lama Mingyar Dondup was peering over my shoulder, he picked up one of the pieces and said, "Ah! This will be spare parts. I have no doubt that these lockers contain spare parts enough to make this thing work again." We pushed the drawer shut, and moved on. The light moved ahead of us and dimmed as we passed, and soon we came to a large room. As we entered it became brilliantly illuminated, and we both gasped, this was obviously the control room of the thing but what made us gasp was the fact that there were men about. One was sitting in what I imagined to be the control chair and he was peering at a meter on a board in front of him. There were quite a number of meters, and I surmised that he was just getting ready to take off. I said, "But how can these be millions of years old? These men look alive but soundly asleep."

There was another man sitting at a table and he had some large charts in front of him. He had his head held between his hands and his elbows rested on the table. We spoke in whispers. It was awesome, and our science was nothing but mumbo jumbo compared to this.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup caught hold of one of the figures by the shoulder, and said, "I think these men are in some form of suspended animation. I think they could be brought back to life, but I do not know how to do it, I do not know what would happen if I did know how to do it. As you know, Lobsang, there are other caves in this mountain range and we visited one with strange implements in it like ladders which, apparently, worked mechanically. But this beats anything I have seen so far, and as one of the senior Lamas who is responsible for maintaining these intact I can tell you that this one is the most

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wonderful of all, and wonder if there are any other knobs that we should press to open other rooms. But let us have a good look in this one first. We have about a week, because I think it will take at least that long before I am fit to climb down the mountainside."

We went around looking at the other figures, seven of them in all, and they all gave the impression that they were ready to take off when something frightful occurred. It looked as if there had been an earthquake which toppled heavy rocks on what was probably a sliding roof.

The Lama stopped and approached another man who had a book—a notebook—in front of him. Obviously he had been writing the record of what was happening, but we could not read the writing, we had no basis for assuming that these things were letters, ideographs, or even just technical symbols. The Lama said, "In all our searches we have not found anything which would enable us to translate—wait a minute," he said with some unwonted excitement in his voice, "that thing over there, I wonder if that is a machine for speaking a record. Of course, I don't suppose that it will work after all these years, but we will try."

Together we moved over to the instrument which he had mentioned. We saw it was a form of box, and about half way down there was a line all the way around. Experimentally we pushed up on the surface above the line, and to our delight the box opened and inside there were wheels and one thing which seemed to be for the conveyance of a metal strip from one spool to another.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup peered down at the press-buttons arrayed along the front. Suddenly we nearly jumped out of our skins; we nearly turned and ran for it because a voice came from out of the top part of the box, a strange voice much, much different from ours.

It sounded like some foreigner lecturing, but what he was lecturing about we did not know. And then—surprise again—noises came out of the box, music I suppose they would call it, but to us it sounded all discords. So my Guide pressed another button and the noise stopped.

We were both rather exhausted with what we had discovered and by an excess of excitement, so we sat down on what were obviously chairs and I felt panic because I seemed to sink right down in the chair as if I was actually sitting on air. As soon as we recovered from that shock the Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Perhaps we should have some tsampa to cheer us up because I think both of us are exhausted." He looked about to see where we could light a little fire to warm up the tsampa, and he was soon rewarded because there was a cubicle off the control room and as he entered it the light came on. The Lama

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said, "I think this must have been where they prepared their food because all these buttons are not there for ornament, they are there for some useful purpose." He pointed to one button which had a picture of a hand held in the stop position. Another button had a picture of flame, so he pushed the one with flame marked on it, and above that instrument there were various metal vessels. We took one down.

By this time we were feeling heat, and the Lama moved a hand about and finally said, "There you are, Lobsang, feel that, there is the heat for our cooking."

I put my hand where he said, but a bit too close, and I jumped back in some alarm. But my Guide just laughed and put near-frozen tsampa in the metal container and then rested it on some bars over the hot thing underneath them. He added water, and soon we saw a little dribble of steam coming up from the dish. With that he pressed the button marked with the hand symbol, and immediately the red glow ceased. He took the metal dish off the heat source, and with a metal thing with a big dished end he ladled tsampa into our bowls. For some time there was no sound other than the noise we made eating.

With the tsampa finished I said, "I wish I could get a good drink, I am as thirsty as can possibly be."

By the side of the box which made heat we saw what seemed to be a big basin, and above there were two metal handles. I tried one and turned it in the only way it would go, and water, cold water, gushed out into the basin. I hastily turned the handle back and tried the other one which was of a reddish colour. I turned that and really hot water came out, so much so that I scalded myself, not very seriously, but I still scalded myself enough to make me jump, so I turned that handle back to its original position. "Master," I said, "if this is water it must have been here one of those millions of years that you talked about. How is it that we are able to drink it, it should be all evaporated or gone sour by now, but I find it quite pleasant."

The Lama replied, "Well, water can be kept good for years, how about the lakes and the rivers? They were water far beyond history, and I suppose this water is from an airtight container which means that it should stay palatable. I surmise that this ship had just come here for supplies, and perhaps for some repairs, because with the pressure of water that came out there must be quite a large amount in some storage tank. Anyway, we've got enough here to keep people busy for a month."

I said, "Well, if the water kept fresh there must be food here, perhaps that has kept fresh as well." I got up from the chair with some difficulty because

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it seemed to want to cling to me, but then I put my hands on the side of the chair—on the top of the armrests—and immediately I was not only released from the chair but I was shot up to a standing position. Having recovered from that marvel and shock, I went along feeling the walls in the little kitchen. I saw a lot of indentations which seemed to have no purpose. I put my finger in one and pulled, and nothing happened. I tried to pull it sideways, but no, the thing did not work, so I went to another one and I pushed my finger straight into the indentation and a panel slid aside. Inside that closet, or cabinet, or whatever the thing was called, there were a number of jars which seemed to be without any joins anywhere. There were transparent panels so that one could see what was inside. Obviously it was some sort of food, but how could food be preserved for a million years or more?

I puzzled and puzzled over the problem. There were pictures of foods that I had never seen or heard of, and some of the things were encased in a transparent container yet there seemed to be no way of opening the container. I went from one of these closets, cupboards, or storage rooms to another, and each time there was a fresh surprise. I knew what tea leaves were like, but here in one of the cabinets there were containers which I could see through the transparent sides contained tea leaves.

There were other surprises because some of these transparent containers had what was obviously cuts of meat inside them. I had never tasted meat and I longed to have a go at it to see, or rather to taste, what it was like.

I quickly tired of playing in the kitchen and I went in search of the Lama Mingyar Dondup. He had a book in his hand and he was frowning and in a state of intense concentration.

"Oh, Master," I said, "I have found where they keep their food, they have it stored in boxes that one can see through, but there is no way of opening them." He looked at me blankly for a moment and then burst out with a laugh. "Oh yes, oh yes," he said, "the packaging of the present day materials is nothing like the packaging of a million years ago. I have tasted dinosaur meat and it was as fresh as if from a newly killed animal. I will come with you shortly and we will investigate."

I walked around that control room and then I sat down to think things over. If these men were a million years old why had they not crumbled into dust? It was clearly ridiculous to say that these men were a million years old when they were absolutely intact and appeared to be fully alive and just awaiting an awakening. I saw that hung on the shoulders of each one there was a sort of small satchel, so I removed one from one of the "sleeping bodies" and I opened it. Inside there were curious bits of wire twisted in coils, and there

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were other things made of glass, and the whole thing made no sense at all to me. There was a rack inside full of buttons, press buttons, and I pressed the first one I saw. I screamed with fear; the body from which I had taken that satchel suddenly jerked and crumbled into fine, fine dust, the dust of a million years or more.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup came over to where I stood petrified with fright. He looked at the satchel, and he looked at the pile of dust, and then he said,

"There are quite a number of these caves, I have visited a few of them and we have learned never to press a button until you know what it does, until you have worked it out by theory. These men knew that they were going to be buried alive in some tremendous earthquake, so the doctor of the ship would have gone to each man and put a survival kit on his shoulder. The men would then go into a state of suspended animation so that they would know nothing whatever of what was happening to them or around them, they would be as near dead as anyone could be without actually dying. They would be receiving adequate nourishment to keep the body functioning on a minute scale. But when you touched this button, which I see is a red button, you would have discontinued the supply of life force to the man in suspended animation. Having no longer a life force supply his age would come upon him suddenly, and he would immediately turn into a pile of dust."

We went around to the other men and we decided that there was nothing we could do for them because, after all, we were shut in the mountain and the ship was shut in the mountain, and if these people came awake would they be a danger to the world? Would they be a danger to the lamaseries? These men, of course, were possessed of knowledge which would make them appear as Gods to us, and we were afraid of being made into slaves again because we had a very strong racial memory that we had been slaves at some time.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup and I sat together on the floor not speaking but each buried in his own thoughts. What would happen if we pressed this button, and what would happen if we pressed that button, and what sort of supply of energy could it be that would keep men alive and well nourished for more than a million years? Involuntarily we both shuddered at the same time, and then we looked at each other and the Lama said, "You are a young man, Lobsang, and I am an old man. I have seen much and I wonder what you would do in a case like this. These men are alive, there is no doubt about that, but if we bring them back to full life what if they are savage, what if they kill us because we have let one of their number die? We have to think this over most seriously, we can't read the inscriptions;" he stopped there because I had

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jumped to my feet in some excitement. "Master, Master," I cried, "I have found a book which seems to be a sort of dictionary of different languages, I wonder if it would help us." Without waiting for a reply I jumped up and rushed into a room near the kitchen, and there was this book looking as if it had just been produced. I grabbed it with two hands because it was heavy, and then I dashed back to the Lama, my Guide, with it.

The Lama took the book and with ill-concealed suppressed excitement he opened the pages. For some time he sat there absolutely absorbed in the book. At last he became aware that I was jumping about in extreme agitation wondering what it was and why he did not tell me.

"Lobsang, Lobsang, I'm sorry, I apologize to you," said the Lama, "but this book is the Key to everything, and what a fascinating tale it is. I can read it, it is written in what seems to be our honorific language. The average person, of course, could not read honorific Tibetan, but I can and this ship is about two million years old. It works on energy obtained from light—any light, the light of the stars, the light of the sun; and it picks up energy from those sources which have already used that energy and passed it on."

"These men," he referred again to the book, "were an evil lot, they were servants of the Gardeners of the World. But it is the old tale, men and women, men want women just as women want men, but this ship was crewed by men who had abandoned the great mothership and this, actually, is what they term a lifeboat. The food would be quite safe to eat, and the men could be awakened, but no matter how long they have been here they are still renegades because they tried to find women who would be much too small for them and their association with the women would be an absolute torture to the latter. They wonder if their life satchels will work or whether it will have been switched off automatically from the ship which they refer to as the mothership. I think we shall have to experiment a bit and read some more because it seems clear to me that if these men are allowed to live then they have such knowledge that they can do us harm which we could never overcome because these people treat us as cattle, as things on which to carry out genetic experiments. Already they have done harm because of their sexual experiments with our women, but you are too young to know all about that yet."

I wandered around the place. The Lama was lying down on the floor to ease his legs which were giving quite a bit of trouble. I wandered around, and eventually I came to a room which was all green. There was a very peculiar looking table there with a great big light over it, and there were what appeared to be glass boxes all over the place. "Hmm," I thought to myself, "this must be where they repair their sick people, I'd better go and tell the Boss about this."

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So I hustled off and told the Lama Mingyar Dondup that I had found a very peculiar room, a room that was all green and which had strange things encased in what looked like glass but wasn't. Slowly he got to his feet and with the help of the two staves made his way to the room I had discovered.

As soon as I entered—I was leading the way—lights came on, lights just like daylight, and the Lama Mingyar Dondup stood there in the doorway with a look of immense satisfaction on his face. "Well done, Lobsang, well done," he said, "that is two discoveries which you have made. I am sure this information will be well received by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama." He walked around looking at various things, picking up other things, and peering at the contents of some of the—well, I do not know what to call them—some of the things in glass cubes were absolutely beyond my comprehension. But at last he sat down on a low chair, and he became enthralled in a book which he had taken from a shelf. "How is it," I asked, "that you can understand a language which you say is at least a million years old?"

With an effort he put aside the book for a moment while he thought over my question. Then he said, "Well, it's quite a long tale, you know, Lobsang. It leads us back throughout the bylanes of history, it leads us through paths which even some of the Lamas cannot follow. But briefly it is like this: This world was ready to be colonized and so our Masters—I must call them Masters because they were the head men of the Gardeners of the Earth and of other worlds—dictated that a certain species should be grown on the Earth, and that certain species was us.

"In a far distant planet, right out of this Universe, preparations were made and a special ship was made which could travel at an absolutely unbelievable speed, and we, as human embryos, were packed in the ship. Somehow the Gardeners, as they were called, brought them to this world and then we do not know what happened between the time of the arrival of the embryos and—the first creatures that could be called human.

"But during their absence from their home world much occurred. The old ruler, or 'God', was aged and there were certain people of evil intent who wanted his power, and they managed to get rid of that God and put another one—their own puppet—to rule in his place. His ruling, of course, to be dictated by these renegades.

"The ship came back from the Earth and found things very different, they found they were not welcome and the new ruler wanted to kill them so they would be out of the way. But instead the Gardeners who had just returned from the Earth grabbed a few women of their own size and they took off again for the Earth Universe (there are many, many different universes, you know, Lobsang.)

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"Arrived at the world where they had been growing humans they set up their own dominion, they built various artifacts like pyramids with which they could keep radio watch over anything coming in the direction of the Earth. They used the humans that they had grown as slaves, they did all the work and the Gardeners just sat back in luxury and told the human slaves what to do.

"The men and women, perhaps we should call them the supermen and the superwomen, got tired of their own partners, and there were many liaisons which led to bickering and all manner of trouble. But then from outer space and undetected by the pyramid searchers a space ship appeared. It was a vast ship, and it settled down so that people could come out of it and start to build habitations. The people who were the first on the Earth resented the appearance of these other space men and women, and so, from a battle of words, there came a battle of people. The trouble went on for some time, and the most devilish inventions were made. At last the people in the big space ship could not put up with the trouble any longer so they sent out a number of space ships which apparently were stored ready for such an occasion, and they dropped terrible bombs wherever these other space people were living.

"The bombs were a very advanced form of atom bomb, and within sight of where the bomb had exploded everything became dead. There was a purple glare coming from the land and the space men and women who had fused this got back in their giant space ship and left the area.

"For a hundred years or more there was hardly any form of life on the Earth in the bombed areas, but when the radiation's effects lessened these people crept out in fear and trembling wondering what they would see. They settled down to a form of farming using wooden ploughs and things like that."

"But Master," I said, "you say the world is more than fifty million years old; well, there are such a lot of things I do not understand at all, for instance these men—well, we don't know how old they are, we don't know how many days, weeks, or centuries they have been here, and how can food have been kept fresh all these years? Why didn't the men crumble to dust?"

The Lama laughed. "We are an illiterate people, Lobsang. There used to be very much more clever people on this Earth, there have been several civilizations, you know. For instance," he pointed to a book on the shelf, "this book tells about medical and surgical practises of a type we in Tibet have never even heard of, and we were one of the first people to be put on this Earth."

"Then why are we up so high, why is our life so hard? Some of those picture books you brought back from Katmandu show all sorts of things, but we have no knowledge of things like that, we have nothing on wheels in Ti-

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bet."

"No, there is an old, old saying that when Tibet permits wheels to be brought into the country then Tibet will be conquered by a very unfriendly race. Their predictions were just as if they could see into the future, and I am going to tell you, young man, that they could see into the future and they had instruments here which will show you what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future," my Guide said.

"But how can things last so long? If things are left, well, they decay, they fall to pieces, they become useless through disuse like the Prayer Wheel in that old lamasery, that you showed me, a beautiful piece of work corroded and immovable. How could these people stop things from decaying, how could they provide the power to keep things working? Look at the way the lights come on as soon as we enter a room; we have nothing like that, we use stinking butter candles or rush lights, and yet here we have light which is as good as daylight, and it is not being generated anywhere because in that book you showed me there were pictures of machines that worked in a magnetic field and generated what you call electricity. We don't have that. Why is it that we are so isolated?" I was puzzled.

The Lama was silent for a moment, and then he said, "Yes, you will have to know all these things, you are going to be the most educated Lama that there ever was in Tibet, you are going to see the past, the present, and the future. In this particular range of the mountains there are a number of these caves and at one time they were all joined together by tunnels. It was possible to move from one cave to another and have light and fresh air the whole time, no matter where we were. But this land of Tibet was once down by the sea, people lived on that land with just a very few low hills, and the people of that earlier Age had sources of power quite unknown to us. But there came a terrific catastrophe because beyond our land scientists of a country called Atlantis let off a tremendous explosive and that ruined this world."

"Ruined this world?" I said. "But our land is all right, how is it ruined, how is the world ruined?"

The Lama got up and went to a book. There were such a lot of books here, and he went to a book and found certain pictures. Then he said, "Look, this world once was covered with cloud. There was never a sight of the sun, we knew nothing about the stars. But then in those days people lived hundreds of years, not like now dying as soon as they have learned anything. People die off now because of the evil radiations from the sun, and because our protecting cloud cover had gone; then dangerous rays came and saturated the world bringing all sorts of diseases, all sorts of mental aberrations. The world was in tur-

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moil, the world writhed under the impact of that tremendous explosion. Atlantis, which was a long way from here on the other side of the world, Atlantis sank beneath the ocean, but we of Tibet—well, our land went up twenty-five to thirty thousand feet above sea level. People became less healthy and for a long time people fell dead because there was not enough oxygen at this height for them, and because we were nearer the skies and where we were the radiations were stronger.” He stopped for a moment and rubbed his legs which were paining him a great deal, and then he said, “There is a far part of our land which stayed at sea level and the people there became more and more different from us, they became almost stupid in their mentality, they had no temples, they did not worship the Gods, and even now they go about in skin boats catching seals and fish and other forms of life. There are some immense creatures with enormous horns on their heads, and these people killed many of them and ate their flesh. When other races came along they called these far-northern people Eskimos. Our part of Tibet had the best people, priests, and wise men, and doctors of great renown, and the part which was sheared away from Tibet and sank to sea level, or rather, stayed at sea level, had the lesser mentalities, the ordinary workers, the ordinary people, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. They have remained in almost the same state for more than a million years. They gradually crept out and set about making a living on the surface of the Earth. They set up small farms and within a hundred or so years things appeared to be normal and settled down.

“Before we go any further in our discussions I will ask you to look at my legs, they are paining me a great deal and I have a book here which shows wounds something like mine. I can read enough of it to be aware that I have an infection.” I looked at him hard because what could I, an ordinary chela, do for such a great man? But there it was, I took the rag wrappings off his legs and recoiled at what I saw. The legs were covered in pus, and the flesh looked very, very angry indeed. In addition the legs below the knees were very swollen.

The Lama said, “Now, you will have to follow my instructions exactly. First of all we have to get something which will disinfect these legs. Fortunately everything here is in good condition, and up on that shelf,” he pointed, “you will find a jar with some writing on the glass. I think you will find it is the third container from the left on the second shelf down. Bring it over and I will see if it is the right one.”

Obediently I went over to the shelves and slid back a door which appeared to be made of glass. Now, I didn’t know much about glass because we had very, very little of it in Tibet. Our windows were either covered with oiled paper to make them translucent and so admit some light to the rooms, but most

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people had no windows because they could not afford the cost of bringing glass all the way across the mountains, glass which had to be purchased in India.

I slid the glass door aside, and then I looked at the bottles and—yes—this is the one, I thought, so I took it over to him. He looked at it and read some directions, then he said, “You’d better pass me that big container standing there on the side upside-down. Wash it out well first. There is unlimited water, remember, so you wash it out, and then put a little water in, about three bowlfuls of water.” So I did that, I scoured the container thing which was already spotless, and I guessed three bowlfuls of water and took it back to him. He, to my profound amazement, did something to the bottle and the top came off! I exclaimed, “Oh! You’ve broken the thing, shall I try to find an empty one?”

“Lobsang, Lobsang,” said the Lama, “you really do make me laugh. If there is something in this jar then there has to be a means of getting it in and then getting it out. This is merely what you call a stopper. I will use this stopper upside-down and then it becomes a measuring device. Do you see that?”

I looked at the stopper which he had upside-down and yes, I could see it was a measuring thing of some kind because there were marks all the way down. So then he continued, “We shall have to have some cloth. Now in that cupboard, if you open it, you will find a lot of bundles. Open the cupboard door so that I can see.”

This door was not made of glass and it was not made of wood, it seemed to be something between the two, but I pulled the door open and then I saw that there were a lot of bundles in orderly array. The Lama said,

“Bring over that blue one, and to the right of it there is a white one, bring that as well.” He looked at me, looked at my hands, and said, “And go to the tap and wash your hands. By the tap you will see a cake of white material. Wet your hands and then wet that cake and smear it over your hands, being very careful to get your nails clean.”

I did all that, and I was quite interested in seeing how much lighter my skin appeared. It was something like seeing a Negro for the first time all black, and then seeing the palms of his hands which were pink. Now my hands were just about pink, and I was just going to wipe them on my robe when the Lama said, “Stop!”

He pointed to something that he had taken out of the white package. “Wipe your hands on that and don’t you dare touch your filthy old robe after you have wiped your hands dry. You have to have clean hands for doing this job.”

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It was really interesting because he had a clean sheet of cloth-stuff on the floor, and he had various things on it, a basin, a thing like a scoop, and another thing which I did not understand at all; it is so hard to describe because I had never even seen such a thing, but it appeared to be a tube of glass with markings on it, and at one end there seemed to be a steel needle while at the other end there was a knob. In the tube, which was obviously hollow, there was some coloured liquid which bubbled and sparkled. The Lama said, "Now listen carefully to me; you will have to clean out the flesh all the way down to the bone. Now here we have the fruits of the wonderful, wonderful, very advanced science, and we are going to make full use of it. Take this styrette and pull the end off the tube—wait, I will do it for you—and then you stick that needle in my leg just here," he indicated a particular spot, and that will make the leg numb, otherwise I should probably faint from the excruciating pain which this is going to cause. Now go to it."

I lifted the thing he had called a styrette, and I looked at the Lama and I shuddered. "No, no, I can't do it, I am so afraid of hurting you."

"Lobsang, you are going to be a medical lama, sometimes you will have to hurt people to cure them. Now do as I say and stick that needle in right up to the hilt. I will tell you if the pain is too much."

I picked up the thing again, and I was afraid I was going to faint, but—well—orders were orders. I took hold of the thing not too far from where the needle joined the body, and I closed my eyes and jabbed quickly. There was not a sound from the Lama, so I opened my eyes and found that he was smiling! "Lobsang, you made a very fine job of that, I felt not a twinge. You are going to be a success as a medical lama." I looked at him suspiciously thinking that he was making fun of me, but I saw that, no, he was perfectly sincere in what he had said. He continued, "Now, we have given this long enough and this leg feels quite dead so it won't respond to pain. I want you to take those things, they are called forceps, by the way, and I want you to put a little of this liquid in a bowl and then wipe the leg thoroughly in a downward direction—downward, not up but down. You can press fairly hard and you will find that the pus comes away in lumps. Well, when you've got a nice pile of puss on the ground you'll have to help me move to a fresh spot."

I picked up the things he had called forceps and found that I could pick up a nice bundle of this cotton stuff. I carefully dipped it in the bowl and wiped his legs. It was incredible, absolutely incredible, how the pus and dried blood came pouring away from the leg, from the wounds.

I got that leg quite clean, the bone was clean and the flesh was clean. Then the Lama said, "This is a powder. I want you to shake the powder into the

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wounds so it gets as far as the bone. It will disinfect the legs and prevent more pus from forming. When you have done that you will have to bandage my legs with a bandage from that blue packet."

So we went on cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, shaking in this white dust, and then putting some plastic wrapping thing over the leg and after bandaging it, not too tightly but just tight enough. By the time I had finished I really was absolutely asweat, but the Lama was looking better.

After I had done one leg I did the other, and then the Lama said, "You'd better give me a stimulant, Lobsang. It's up on that top shelf and you just bring down one ampoule, an ampoule is a little container with a pointed end, and you snap off the pointed end and jab the ampoule against my flesh, anywhere."

So I did that and then I cleaned up all the pus and mess, and then I fell asleep on my feet.

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CHAPTER THREE

My! The sun was hot indeed. "I shall have to find a shady spot," I muttered to myself. And then I sat up and opened my eyes and gazed about with blank astonishment. Where was I? What had happened? And then, as I saw the Lama Mingyar Dondup, it all came back to me, and I had thought perhaps it was just a dream. There was no sun, the place was lit by some- thing which looked like sunlight coming through glass walls.

"You do look absolutely amazed, Lobsang," said the Lama. "I hope you have had a good rest."

"Yes, Master," I replied, "but I am becoming more and more puzzled, and the more things are explained the more puzzled I become. For instance, this light coming from some- where, it can't be stored up for a million years and then shine as brightly as the sun itself."

"There are a lot of things you will have to learn, Lobsang, you are a bit young yet but as we have arrived at this place—well, I will explain a bit to you. The Gardeners of the Earth wanted secret places so they could come to Earth unknown to the earthlings, and so when this was just a low heap of stone protruding above the ground they cut into the living stone by means of what will later be known as atomic torches. It melted out the rock and a lot of the grey surface outside is steam from the melted rock, and then when the cave was cut out to the right size it was allowed to cool, and it cooled with an absolutely glass-smooth surface.

"Having done the cavern which is big enough to take the Potala itself, they did some investigating and then they bored tunnels right along this rock range which in those days was almost covered by earth. It used to be possible to travel about two hundred and fifty miles through these tunnels, from cave to cave.

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"Then there was this mighty explosion which rocked the Earth on its axis, and some places were drowned and other places rose up. We were fortunate in that the low hill became a mountain range. I have seen pictures of it and I will show them to you, but of course through the Earth movements some of the tunnels were forced out of alignment and one could no longer go the whole length as before. Instead we could visit perhaps two or three caves before emerging out on the mountain range and then walking a bit to where we knew the tunnel would continue. Time doesn't matter at all to us, as you know, so I am one of those who has been to about a hundred of these places and I have seen many, many strange things."

"But, Master," I said, "how can these things remain workable after a million or so years? No matter what we have, even a Prayer Wheel, deteriorates with time and use, and yet here we are in light probably brighter than it is outside. I don't understand it at all "

The Lama sighed, and said, "Let's have some food first, Lobsang, we are going to be here for several days and we could do with a change of diet. You go into that little room," he pointed, "and bring out some of those containers with pictures on them, and then we will see how the people of long, long ago used to live."

I rose to my feet and said to myself, "My, I know what I must do first. Honourable Lama," I said, "can I help you to attend to your body functions?" He smiled at me and replied, "Many thanks, Lobsang, but that is already attended to. There is a little place over there in that far corner, and if you go in there you will find there is a very convenient hole in the floor. Get over that hole and let Nature take its course!"

I went off in the direction to which he had pointed and found the appropriate hole and made use of it. The room was of a glass-smooth surface and yet the flooring was not smooth, it was matt-like and one had no fear of slipping. Well, with that accomplished I thought of food again so I went into the room at the far end and carefully washed my hands because it was such a luxury to be able to turn a metal bar and find water would come out of a spout. I washed my hands thoroughly and turned off the tap, and then I felt a warm blast of air coming from a hole in the wall. It was a rectangular-shaped hole and it occurred to me that my hands would soon dry if I put them in that rectangular hole, and that is what I did and I think that was the best wash I ever had. The water was so pleasant, and I was keeping my hands in the hole when the heat went off. I suppose the designers allowed a certain amount of time in which people could reasonably be expected to dry off their hands. Then I went to the closet and opened the doors, and looked with bewilderment at the array of

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containers. There were all manner of containers with pictures, and the pictures were so strange that they meant nothing to me. For instance, a red thing with great big claws, it looked a ferocious monster and some- thing, I thought, like an earwig. And then there were other pictures which showed what appeared to be spiders dressed in red armour. Well, I passed up those, and instead picked out some which had what was obviously fruit of some sort, some were red, some green, and others were yellow, and they all looked attractive.

So I picked up as many as I could carry, and then I saw a trolley thing standing in the corner. It had wheels to it, and I put all these containers in and pushed the trolley thing out to the Lama Mingyar Dondup. He laughed like anything when he saw how I was managing, and he said, "And how did you like your hands washed? Did you like the method of drying them? Just think, that has been here for a few million years and it is still working because the atom which powers all this equipment is virtually indestructible, and when we leave everything will sigh to a stop, all the power will go back into storage and there it will wait until the next people come. Then the lights will come on again—the lights, by the way, are things which you would not understand because behind the glass-like surface there is a chemical which responds to a certain impetus by generating cold light. But let's see what you have brought."

I handed down the things to him, one by one, and he picked out four canisters and said, "I think that will do us for now, but we shall want something to drink. In the cupboard above the water tap you will find containers that will hold water, so you fill two of those containers with water and in the bottom of the cupboard you will find another container with pellets inside. Bring one of those pellets and we shall have water of a different flavor."

Back I went into the—well—kitchen, and I found the containers just as described, and I filled them with water and took them out to the Lama. Then I went back and picked up a tube which held funny little tablets, they were orange coloured. So with that I went out again and the Lama took the container from me and did something to the top, and out popped a pellet straight into the glass of water. Then he repeated the performance, and a pellet popped out into the other glass of water. He then put one of the containers to his lips and had a hearty drink. I dubiously followed his example, and was surprised and delighted at the pleasant taste.

Then the Lama said, "Let's have some food before we drink any more." So he picked up one of the round containers and pulled on a little ring. There was a woosh of air. With that, as soon as the wooshing stopped, he pulled harder on the ring and the whole top of the container came off. Inside there were fruits. He smelt them carefully, then he took out one and put it in his mouth. "Yes, yes,

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they have kept perfectly, kept absolutely fresh. I will open one for you, pick which one you prefer and give it to me.”

I looked at the things, and there were some black fruit with little knobs all over them, so I said I would have that one. He pulled on a ring and again the woosh.

Then he pulled harder and the entire top came off. But then there was a problem, these things inside were small and they were in liquid, so the Lama said, “We shall have to be more civilized. You go in and in one of the drawers you will find some pieces of metal which are dished at one end and they have a handle to them. Bring out two of them, one for you and one for me. By the way, they are metal and of a silvery colour.”

Off I went again, soon to return with these peculiar bits of metal. “There are other things there, Master, bits of metal with spikes at one end, and others with what looks like a knife edge on one end.”

“Oh yes, forks and knives, we will try them later on, but these things are spoons. Dip the ends of a spoon in your canister and you can ladle out fruit and juice, and then you can eat it or drink it without getting a mess all over yourself.” He showed me by ladling out fruit from his container, so I followed his example and put the metal thing in the canister to ladle out a small amount of the stuff. I wanted to taste a little first because I had never seen anything like this before.

“Ah!” It slid down my throat and left me feeling very gratified. I had not realized how hungry I was. Soon my canister was empty. The Lama Mingyar Dondup was even faster. “We’d better go easy, Lobsang, because we’ve been out of food for quite a time.

“I do not feel able to walk about, Lobsang, so I suggest that you wander around looking at different compartments because we want to know all we can.” Somewhat truculently I walked out of the big room and found that there were rooms all over the place. I went into one, the lights came on and the place seemed to be full of machinery which shone as though they had been installed only the same day. I wandered around nearly afraid to touch anything, but then quite by accident I came to a machine which was already showing a picture. It showed buttons being pressed and it was a moving picture, it showed a sort of a chair and a strange looking man was helping an even stranger looking man to sit in the chair. And then the helping man took hold of two handles and I saw him twist the right-hand handle and the chair rose up several inches. Then the picture changed and showed the chair being pushed along to different machines, and doing things to them.

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It was doing it for me. I turned hurriedly and tripped over the wheeled chair, and fell flat on my face. My nose felt as if it had been knocked off and was all wet, so I had damaged my nose and it was bleeding. I pushed the chair in front of me and hurried back to the Lama.

"Oh, Master, I tripped over this unmentionable chair and now I want a piece of something to wipe my bloody face."

I went to a box and unwrapped one of the blue-wrapped rolls. Yes, there was that peculiar white stuff inside like a lot of cotton bundled up together. After I had had it applied to my nostrils for several minutes the bleeding stopped, and I threw the bloody mess of cotton into a container which happened to be standing empty, and something impelled me to look in the container. I was shocked to see that the material just disappeared, not in the darkness or anything like that, but just disappeared. So I went over to the corner where I had swept all the puss and general muck, and with a flat piece of metal which had a wooden handle to it I picked up as much as I could at one go, and I dropped it in the refuse container where it all disappeared. Then I went to the far corner which of necessity we had used for our attention to the calls of Nature, and I scraped up everything that was there and put it in the container. Immediately all the stuff disappeared, and the container was looking shiny and new.

"Lobsang, I think that container should fit in that hole that we have been using, see if it will fit, will you?"

I trundled the thing in and—yes—it fitted perfectly into that hole, so I left it there ready for immediate use!

"Master, Master," I said in great excitement, "if you will sit in this chair I can take you around and show you some absolute marvels." The Lama gingerly got to his feet and I slid the chair in under him. Then I twisted the handle as I had seen in the moving picture and the chair rose about a foot in the air, just the right height for me to hold the handles and steer the thing. So with the Lama Mingyar Dondup in the, what I called wheeled chair which obviously depended on levitation and not wheels, we went back into that room with all the machinery.

"I think this was their entertainment room, Lobsang," said the Lama. "All these things are for playing games. Let's have a look at that box near the entrance to this room." So I turned about and pushed the chair back to the entrance, and I pushed the chair right up tight against the machine in which I had seen the chair-instructions. Once again I pressed a button and saw a moving picture. Of all incredible things it showed the Lama Mingyar Dondup getting

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into the chair and me pushing him in. And then we moved several feet in the room and the Lama was saying something so we turned around and went back to that machine. We saw all this which had just happened. Then the picture changed and it showed various machines, and it gave picture instructions about what they were. There was a machine near the center of the room, and if one pushed a button there, various colored small objects slid out into a tray, so we made our way there. The Lama pushed the indicated button, and with a metallic clatter some round things rolled out of a chute and into a little tray beneath the chute. We looked at the things, we tried to break them, and then I saw at the side of the machine a little dish thing with above it a curved blade. I put some of the round things in the container and pulled down on a handle—in fear and trembling—to see what would happen. The things were soon cut in half, and in them there appeared to be something gooey. I, always more or less thinking of food, touched one of the insides and then touched it against my tongue.

Ecstasy! The most wonderful taste I had ever had in my life. "Master," I said, "this is something you really must try." I wheeled him around to the button and he pressed again, and a lot more of these things came out. I took one and put it in my mouth, and it was just as if I had got a stone in my mouth. After a few moments, though, the outer shell of the thing became soft and my continued jaw pressure broke through the surface and then I got the sweetest of sweet tastes.

There seemed to be different flavors. Each colour had a different flavor. Now I hadn't the faintest idea what this was, and the Lama saw I was at a loss. "I have traveled a lot, you know, Lobsang, and in a Western city I saw a machine like this, it had candy balls in it, the same as these are. But in that Western city one had to put money. One put a coin in a slot and so many of these balls would roll out. There were other machines like it, providing different things. There was one that appealed to me particularly because it had a stuff called chocolate in it. Now, I can't write the word for you. "Ah!"

"Ah!" he said, "There it is, there is that word written down here with six other words. I suppose they are all different languages. But let's see if this one works."

He pressed the button firmly, and the machine gave a little cough, and a door opened in the front. There we saw different types of chocolate or candies, and so we helped ourselves to so much that we felt heartily sick. I frankly thought I was going to die! I went to that disposal place and brought up all those things which I had eaten. The Lama Mingyar Dondup, abandoned in his chair, called for me to collect him in a hurry, so we will just draw a veil over the rest of that

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experience.

Recovered quite a lot, we discussed the matter, and came to the conclusion that it was our greed which had made us eat too much of a strange food, so we moved into another room and this must have been a repair room. There were all manner of very strange machines, and I recognized one as being a lathe. The Dalai Lama had one in one of his storage rooms, it had been sent to him by a friendly nation who wanted to be friendlier still. Nobody knew how to use it, of course, but I sneaked into the room on many, many occasions and eventually was able to work out what the thing was.

It was a treadle lathe. You sat on a wooden seat and you used your feet together to push two pedals up and down. That caused a wheel to rotate, and if one put, say, a piece of wood between what was labeled "headstock" and "tailstock" one could carve the wood and make absolutely straight rods. I could not see what use it could be, but I took our staves and smoothed them off, and we felt so much better with what I could only call a professionally made stave.

We moved about and we saw a thing which appeared to be a hearth. There were blow pipes and all manner of heat-tools about, and soon we were experimenting. We found that we could join metals together by melting one piece onto another, and we spent much time trying out different things and improving our skills. But then the Lama said, "Let's look elsewhere, Lobsang, there are some wonderful things here, eh?"

So I twisted the handle again, and the wheeled chair rose about two feet. I pushed it out of the tool room and into a room right across a big space. Here was mystery indeed. There were a number of tables, metal tables, with huge bowls over them. It did not make any sense to us, but then in an adjoining room we found a recess into the floor and printed on the wall just above it there were obviously instructions on how to use the thing. Fortunately there were also pictures showing how to use it, so we sat down on the edge of the empty pool and took off the Lama's bandages. Then from the side I helped him to stand up, and immediately he stood in the centre of the pool it began to fill with a steaming solution!

"Lobsang, Lobsang, this is going to heal my legs. I can read certain of the words on the wall, and if I can't read it in one language I can in another. This is a thing for regenerating flesh and skin."

"But Master," I said, "how can that possibly heal your legs, and how is it that you know so much about these languages?"

"Oh, it's very simple," he said, "I've been studying this type of thing for the whole of my life. I have traveled extensively throughout the world, and I

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have picked up different languages. You may have noticed that I have books always with me, and I spend all the time I have to spare reading these books and learning from them. Now, this language," He pointed to writing on the wall, "is what is called Sumarian, and this one was the main language of one of the Atlantises."

"Atlantises?" I thought, "But the place was Atlantis." I said so, and the Lama laughed at me quite gleefully and said, "No, no, Lobsang, there is no such place as Atlantis, it is a generic term for the many lands which sank beneath the ocean and all trace of the lands was lost."

"Oh," I said, "I thought Atlantis was a place where they had a very advanced civilization to the extent that it made us like country yokels, but now you tell me there was no one specific Atlantis."

He broke in on my speech and said, "There is so much confusion about it, and the scientists of the world won't believe the truth. The truth is this; once upon a time this world had just one land mass. The rest was water, and eventually, through the vibrations of the Earth such as earthquakes, the one land mass was broken up into islands, and if they were bigger islands then they were called continents. They gradually drifted apart so that many of these islands had people who had forgotten the Old Language, and they used their own family dialect as their standard language. Years ago there was no speech, everyone communicated by telepathy, but then some wicked people took advantage of knowing what everyone was communicating to everyone else, and so it became the custom that in communities the leaders of the communities devised languages which they would use when they did not want to use telepathy which anyone could pick up. In time the language became used more and more, and the art of telepathy was lost except for a few people like some of us in Tibet. We can communicate by thought. I, as an illustration, have communicated with a friend at Chakpori and told him of my exact situation, and he replied to the effect that it was just as well to stay where we were because there were raging storms which would make it very difficult for us to descend the mountain side. As he said, what does it matter where we are so long as we are learning something, and I think we are learning a lot. But, Lobsang, this stuff seems to be working marvels on my legs. You look at them and you will actually see them healing."

I did look, and a most eerie sight it was. The flesh had been cut right down to the bone, and I thought the only thing to do would be to amputate his legs when we got back to Chakpori, but now this marvelous round bath thing was healing the flesh. As I watched I could see new flesh growing, uniting the gashes. The Lama suddenly said, "I think I'll get out of this bath now for a time

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because it is making my legs itch so much that I shall have to do a dance if I stay here, and that would be something to make you laugh. So I am coming out, and I don't even want a hand." He stepped surely out of the bath, and as he did so all the liquid disappeared. There was no hole for it, no drain-pipe or anything like that, it seemed just to disappear into the walls and bottom.

"Look, Lobsang, here are some books with utterly fascinating illustrations. It shows how to do certain operations, it shows how to operate those machines outside. We must set to work to try to understand this because we may be able to benefit the world if this ancient, ancient science can be revived."

I looked at some of the books, and they seemed pretty gruesome to me. Pictures of peoples' insides, of people with the most fearful wounds one could imagine, wounds so bad that one could not even imagine them. But I decided I would stick to it and I would learn all I could about the human body. But first I came to the firm conclusion that food was necessary. One can't exercise the brain without a supply of food, and I voiced my thoughts on the matter.

The Lama laughed and said, "Just what I was thinking about. That treatment has made me ravenously hungry, so let's go in this kitchen place and see what there is. We are either going to have to live on fruit or we shall have to break one of our rules and eat meat."

I shuddered, and felt quite sick. Then I said, "But Master, how can we possibly eat the flesh of an animal?"

"But, good gracious me, Lobsang, the animals have been dead millions of years. We don't know how old this place is, but we do know that it is in remarkably good repair. It's better for us to eat some meat and live than just be purists and die."

"Master, how is this place in such a good condition if it is a million years old? It doesn't seem possible to me. Everything wears out, but this place might have been vacated yesterday. I just don't understand it, and I don't understand about Atlantis."

"Well, there is such a thing as suspended animation. In fact these people, the Gardeners of the Earth, were subject to illnesses just the same as we are, but they could not be treated and cured with the crude materials available on this Earth, so when a person was really ill and beyond the skill of the Gardeners on this Earth then the patients were encased in plastic after having the treatment of suspended animation. In suspended animation the patient was alive, but only just. A heartbeat could not be felt, and certainly no breath could be detected, and people could be kept in that state alive for up to five years. A

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ship came down every year to collect these cases and take the sufferer away for treatment in special hospitals in the Home of the Gods. When they were repaired they were as good as new."

"Master, how about those other bodies, men and women, each one in a stone Coffin? I am sure they are dead, but they look alive and they look healthy, so what are they doing here, what are they for?"

"The Gardeners of the Earth are very busy people. Their overseers are even more busy, and if they wanted to know about the real conditions among the earthlings they just took over one of these bodies. Their own astral form entered one of these bodies, they are just cases really, you know, and activated the body. And then one could be a man of thirty, or whatever age suited, without all the bother and mess of being born and living a childhood and perhaps taking a job, and even taking a wife. That could lead to a lot of complications. But these bodies are kept in good repair, and always ready to receive a 'soul' which would activate them for a time, and they would respond to certain stimuli and the body would be able to move under perfect control at the will of the new and temporary occupant of the body-case. There are quite a number of these what we call transmigration people about. They are here to keep a check on the humans and try to avert and redirect some of the violent tendencies of these people."

"I find this utterly fascinating and almost unbelievable. And how about the bodies on the top of the Potala, the ones that are encased in gold, are they to be used as well?"

"Oh dear me, no," said the Lama. "These are humans of a superior type, and when the body dies the ego moves on to higher realms. Some go to the astral world where they wait about, studying some of the people in the astral world, but I shall have to tell you more about this and about the realm of Patra. So far as I am aware it is only we Tibetan lamas who know anything about Patra, but it's too big a subject to be rushed. I suggest that we look around a bit because this is quite a large cave complex." The Lama moved away from me to put some books back on the shelves, and I said, "Isn't it a pity to leave such valuable books on shelves like this, would it not be better for us to take them back to the Potala?"

The Lama Mingyar Dondup gave me a peculiar look, and then he said, "I grow more and more amazed at how much you know at your very young age, and the Dalai Lama has given me full permission to tell you anything that I think you should know."

I felt quite flattered at that, but the Lama went on, "You were present at

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the interview with those English soldiers, one was called Bell, and the Dalai Lama was absolutely delighted that you did not tell even me about it, what was said, what was done. I deliberately pressed you, Lobsang, to try you out for keeping secrets, and I am very pleased with the way in which you have responded.

"In a few years Tibet will be conquered by the Chinese, they will strip the Potala of all the things that made it the Potala, they will take away the Golden Figures and just melt down those figures for the gold they contain. Sacred books and books of learning will be taken to Peking and studied because the Chinese know that they can learn a lot from us, so we have places of concealment for the more precious things. You would not have found this cave except by the merest chance, and we are going to obliterate the side of the mountain so the merest chance cannot be repeated, and, you see, we have tunnels interconnecting for more than two hundred miles, and the Chinese could not travel in their four-wheeled machines, and they certainly could not travel on foot, whereas to us it is just a two days journey.

"In a few years Tibet will be invaded but not conquered. Our wiser men will go up into the highlands of Tibet and they will live underground in much the same way as the people who escaped before live in the hollow part of this world. Now, don't get excited because we are going to discuss these things. The Dalai Lama says there is no hurry for us to get back. I've got to teach you as much as I can about as many things as I can, and we shall rely upon these books a lot. To take them back to the Potala would merely be to put them in the hands of the Chinese, and that would be a sorry fate indeed.

"Well, I think it is time for us to carry out a systematic search of this particular cave, and we will draw a map of the place."

"No need to, sir," I replied. "Here is a map in the minutest detail ."

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Lama Mingyar Dondup looked exceedingly pleased and he was even more pleased when I pointed out maps of several other caves.

I had been rummaging around on a shelf and marvelling that there was not a speck of dust anywhere, and the—well, I would call it a paper, but actually it was some substance like paper only very, very much finer. Our paper was all handmade stuff from papyri.

But I picked up this pile of paper and saw that they were maps and charts. First there was a very small scale map showing an area of about two hundred and fifty miles, and then the tunnel was marked out with certain breaks in the line to show where it was no longer passable and one would have to get out of our own tunnel and look for the entrance to the other one.

It was shown on the map all right but how many earthquakes had made the map inaccurate, that was the problem. But then the next map was a chart of the cave in which we were now ensconced. It showed all the rooms, and I was amazed at the number of rooms, and the cupboards and rooms were all labeled but, of course, I couldn't read any of it. My Guide, though, could. We laid the map on the floor and lay down on our tummies while we looked at it.

"Lobsang," said the Lama, "you have made some remarkable discoveries on this trip, and it is going to count very heavily in your favour. I brought a young chela here once and he was quite afraid to even enter the cave. You see, the old hermit who fell to his death was actually the Keeper of the entrance, and now we shall have to build a fresh hermitage to guard the entrance."

"I think we hardly need a Guardian, sir," I said, "because the whole of the tunnel through which we entered is blocked apparently through the earthquake shaking a whole sheet of rock, and that slipped down to cover this entrance. Were it not for these maps we could be stuck here for ever."

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The Lama nodded gravely, and got to his feet and walked along beside the shelves looking at the books, reading their titles. Then, with an exclamation of delight, he pounced on one book—oh, it was a massive thing, a great big fat book, looking as though it had just been made. “A dictionary, Lobsang, of the four languages used. Now we are well away.” He picked the book up and again brought it to the floor. It needed the floor to take all the charts, the table would have been too small. But the Lama went rustling through the pages of the dictionary and then, making notes on the chart of our particular cave, he said, “Centuries and centuries ago there was a very high civilization, far higher than the world has reached since, but unfortunately there were more earthquakes and seaquakes, and some lands sank beneath the waves and, according to this dictionary, Atlantis is not just one sunken continent. There was one in the sea which they called Atlantic, and there was another one lower down in the Atlantic, it was a place where there were many high peaks and those peaks still protrude above the waters and now they are called islands. I can show you on the map just where it is.”

He rustled around among the papers and then produced a great big colored sheet of paper, then he pointed out the seas and the places where Atlantis had been. Then he continued, “Atlantis—the lost land, that is the real meaning of the word. It is not a name like Tibet or India, it is a generic term for the lost land, the land which sank without trace.”

We maintained silence while we looked at those charts again. I was anxious to know how to get out of the place. The Lama was anxious to find certain rooms. At last he straightened up and said, “There, Lobsang, there. In that room there are wonderful machines which show us the past and right up to the present, and there is a machine which shows the probable future. You see, with astrology, for example, you can foretell what is going to happen to a country, but when it comes to foretelling one particular person, well, that takes a genius of an astrologer, and you had such a genius astrologer forecast your future, and it is quite a hard future indeed.

“Let us explore some of the other rooms first because we want to spend a long time in the machine room where the machines can show us what happened since the first people came to this world. In this world they have many peculiar beliefs, but we know the truth because we have been able to tap into the Akashic Record and the Akashic Record of Probabilities, that is, we can foretell accurately what will happen to Tibet, what will happen to China, and what will happen to India. But for the individual—no, the Record of Probabilities is very much probability, and not to be taken too seriously.”

“Master,” I said. “I am absolutely confused because all the things I have

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learned have taught me that there is dissolution; paper should crumble to dust, bodies should crumble to dust, and food, after a million years, well, that certainly should have crumbled to dust, and I just cannot understand how this place can be a million or so years old. Everything looks new, fresh, and I just cannot understand it."

The Lama smiled at me, and he said, "But a million years ago there was a much higher science than there is today, and they had a system whereby time itself could be stopped. Time is a purely artificial thing, and is used only on this world. If you are waiting for something very nice then it seems an awful long time that you have to wait for it, but if you have to go to a senior Lama to have a good telling off—well, it seems no time before you are in front of him listening to his opinion of you. Time is an artificial thing, so that people can engage in commerce or in everyday matters. These caves are isolated from the world, they have what I can only call a screen around them, and that screen places them in a different dimension, the fourth dimension where things do not decay. We are going to have a meal before we explore further, and the meal will be of a dinosaur which was killed by hunters two or three million years ago. You will find it tastes quite good."

"But Master, I thought we were forbidden to eat meat."

"Yes, the ordinary persons are forbidden to eat meat. It is considered quite adequate that they live on tsampa because if one gorges oneself on meat then one's brains get clogged. We are having meat because we want the extra strength which meat alone can give, and anyway, we have very little meat, mostly we have vegetables and fruits. But you may rest assured that eating this meat will not harm your immortal soul." With that he got up and went into the kitchen store, and he came out with a big container which had a most horrible picture wrapped around it. It showed what I imagined to be a dinosaur and outlined in red was a marking showing what part of the dinosaur was in the canister. The Lama did some things to the canister, and it came open. I could see that the meat inside was absolutely fresh, it might have been killed that day it was so fresh.

"We are going to cook this because cooked meat is much better than the raw stuff, so you'd better watch what I do." He did some queer things with some of the metal dishes, and then he tipped the contents of the canister into one of those metal dishes and slid it into what looked like a metal cabinet. Then he shut the door and turned some knobs so that little lights came on. He said, "Now, in ten minutes, that will be perfectly cooked because it is not cooked on the flame but it is heated from the inside to the outside. It is some system of rays which I do not profess to understand. But now we must look about for some

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suitable vegetables which will go well with meat."

"But however did you learn all this, Master?" I asked.

"Well, I have traveled quite extensively and I have picked up knowledge from the Western world and I see how they prepare a special meal on the seventh day of the week. I must confess that it tastes really good, but it needs vegetables, and I think we have them here."

He put his hands deep into a closet and pulled out a long canister. He put it on the work shelf and care- full studied the label, then he said, "Yes, here are the vegetables and we have to put them in the oven for five minutes cooking." At that instant one light went out. "Ah," said the Lama, "That is a signal, we must push these vegetables in now." So saying, he went to the oven thing, opened the door, and slid in the complete canister, and then he quickly shut the door. Then he adjusted some of the knobs on the top, and a different light came on.

"When all these lights go off, Lobsang, our meal will be perfectly prepared. So now we have to get plates and those other fearsome implements that you saw, sharp knives and metal things with little bowls at the end, and those other things which have four or five spikes at the end, they are called forks. I think you are going to enjoy this meal."

Just as he finished speaking the little lights flickered, dimmed, and were extinguished. "There you are, Lobsang. Now we can sit on the floor and have a good meal." He moved forward to the hot place which he called an oven, and carefully he slid aside the door. The smell was beautiful and I watched with the keenest anticipation as he took the metal dishes off the shelves. He ladled out a good portion of everything for me, and then not so much for himself. "Start in, Lobsang, start in. We've got to keep your strength up, you know." There were dishes, different coloured vegetables, none of which I had ever seen before, and then this bigger dish with a big lump of dinosaur meat on it. Cautiously I held the meat with my fingers until the Lama told me to use a fork to hold the meat, and showed me how. Well, I cut off a piece of the meat, looked at it, smelt it, and put it in my mouth. Quickly I rushed to the sink in the kitchen and got rid of the meat in my mouth. The Lama was roaring with laughter.

"You're quite wrong in your thoughts, Lobsang. You think I am playing a trick on you but I am not. In some parts of Siberia the local people sometimes dig up a dinosaur which has been caught in the permafrost and frozen so solid that it might take three or four days to thaw. They eat dinosaur meat with the greatest of pleasure."

"Well, they can have my share of this with even greater pleasure for me.

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I thought I was poisoned! What vile stuff is. I would just as soon eat my grandmother than that muck!" Carefully I scraped the last remnants of the meat from my plate, and then looking dubiously at the vegetables I thought I would try some. To my astonishment they tasted very, very good indeed. Mind you, I had never tasted vegetables before, all I had ever had to eat before this occasion was tsampa and water to drink. So now I had a goodly helping of everything until the Lama said, "You'd better stop, Lobsang, you've had a really big meal, you know, and you are not used to these vegetables. This first time they may keep you on the run, they will go through you like a purge and I will give you a couple of tablets which will calm your disturbed stomach."

I swallowed the wretched tablets and they seemed as big as pebbles. After I had swallowed the things the Lama looked and said, "Swallow them like that, eh? The usual way is to wash them down with a good drink of water. Have a go at it now, fill up your cup with water and that will wash away the powdery taste."

Once again I got to my feet and went into the kitchen, tottered into the kitchen would be a better explanation because never in my life having had vegetables or fruit—well, I could feel alarming churning inside me, so alarming, in fact, that I had to put down my cup and rush—run all the way—to that little room with the hole in the floor. A couple more feet and I should have been too late. However, fortunately I reached that hole just in time. I returned to the Lama and said, "There are many things really puzzling me, and I just cannot get them out of my mind. For example, sir, you say this place might be two million years of age, then how is it that the vegetables and the fruit are quite palatable?"

"Look, Lobsang," responded the Lama, "you must remember that this world is millions of years of age, and there have been many, many different types of people here. For example, about two million years ago there was a species of creature on the Earth and they were known as Homo Habilis. They came into our era by inventing the first tools of this particular cycle. You see, Homo Sapiens is what we are, and we are derived from that other Homo which I have just told you about.

"To try to make you understand a bit more, let me say that the world is like a garden, and all the buildings in the world are plants. Well, every so often the farmer will come along and he will plough his garden. That means that he will turn up the soil, and in so doing he will upset all the plants and the roots. They will be exposed to the air for a few minutes, and then as the plough comes over again they will be buried more deeply so that in the end no one could tell that there had been such-and-such a plant in that garden. It is the same with

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humans on the world; think of us as the plants. But the humans of different types are tried out and if they cannot manage to the satisfaction of the gardeners then catastrophes and disasters will be their lot. There will be mighty explosions and earthquakes, and every trace of humanity will be buried, buried deep beneath the soil, and then a fresh race of people will appear. And so the cycle will go on, just as the farmer ploughs under the plants so the gardeners of the world caused such disasters that every trace of the habitations is shattered.

"Every so often a farmer will be busy with his patch of ground, and then he might spot something sparkling in the ground where he is digging, so he will bend over and pick it up, wondering what it is. And perhaps he will tuck it in the front of his robe to take home and show to his wife and perhaps to his neighbors. He might have dug up something which was buried a million or so years ago and now, with earthquakes, that piece of brilliant metal will have been brought to the surface.

"Sometimes a piece of bone will be discovered and the farmer will spend perhaps a couple of minutes wondering what sort of creature it came from because there have been some very queer creatures on this Earth. There have been women, for instance, with a purple skin and eight breasts aside just like a pregnant bitch. I suppose it would be quite useful to have the sixteen breasts, but that race died out because it was impractical. If the woman had given birth to a lot of children her breasts would have become so pendulous that she would hardly be able to walk without falling over, so that race died out. And then there was another race whose men were about four feet tall, none taller than that, and they were born horsemen, not like you who can hardly sit on the tamerest pony we've got, but these were extremely bowlegged and they had no need for stirrups or a saddle, or anything like that; their natural body conformation seemed to have been designed especially for horse riding. Unfortunately the horse hadn't been 'invented' at that time."

"But, sir," I said, "I cannot understand how we can be in a mountain, right inside a mountain, and yet we have good brilliant sunlight and plenty of heat. It baffles me, and I cannot think of any solution."

The Lama smiled as he often smiled at some of my statements, and he said, "These rocks which we call mountains have special properties, they can absorb sunlight, and absorb and absorb it, and then, if one knows how, we can get the sunlight released to any degree of brightness that we need. As the sun is shining more or less all the time on the top of the mountains, well, we are always storing up sunlight for when the sun has gone about her journey and is beyond our vision. It is not at all a magical thing, it is a perfectly ordinary natu-

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ral occurrence like the tides in the sea—oh, I forgot you had never seen the sea, but the sea is a vast body of water, it is not drinkable because it comes from fresh water which has run down a mountain side and across the earth bringing with it all sorts of impurities and poisonous subjects, and if we tried to drink the water it would hasten our death. So we have to use some of the stored sunlight. It falls on a special sort of plate, and then a cold draught of air plays on the other side of the plate, then the light manifests itself as heat on one side and cold on the other. The result of that is that droplets of water form, born of the light from the sun, and the cold from the earth. That will be absolutely pure water called distilled water, and so we can catch it in containers and then we have plenty of fresh drinking water.”

“But, Master, this business of having things a million or two million years old—well, I just cannot understand it all. The water for instance, we turned a metal thing and we got cold water which, obviously, had been put in a tank somewhere a million or so years ago. Well, how hasn’t it evaporated? How can it possibly be drinkable after all these years? It’s got me absolutely defeated. I know on the Potala roof the water tank would soon dry up, so how can this be a million years old?”

“Lobsang! Lobsang! You think we have a good science now, you think we know a lot about medicine and science, but to the outside world even we are just a bunch of uneducated savages. Yet we understand things that the rest of the world does not, the rest of the world is a materialistic group of people. This water might be a million or two million or three million years old in years, but until we came here and broke the seal and set everything working—well, it might have been just an hour or two before. You see, there is such a thing as suspended animation. We have heard a lot from other countries about people who have gone into a cataleptic trance for months, and there is one now which has already passed the year and a half mark, and the person looks none the worse for it, she looks no older, it is just—well, she is alive. We can’t feel a heart beat, we can’t get any breath on a mirror, so what is keeping her asleep and why is it not doing her harm? There are so many things to be rediscovered, all these things were commonplace in the days when the Gardeners came. Purely as an example, let me show you the room—here it is on the chart, look—where bodies were kept in a suspended life stage. Once a year two lamas would go and enter that room, and one by one they would take the bodies out of stone coffins and then examine the bodies carefully for any ills. If everything was all right they would walk the bodies up and down to make their muscles work again. Then, after we had fed the bodies a bit, would come the task of putting the astral body of a Gardener in the body taken from a stone coffin. It is a most peculiar experience.”

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"What, sir? Is it really a difficult thing to do?"

"Now look at you, Lobsang, telling me on the one hand that you can't believe such a thing, and on the other hand you are trying to find as much information as you can. Yes, it is a dreadful feeling. In the astral you are free to be whatever size it is most convenient to be, you might want to be very small for some reason, or you may want to be very tall and broad for some other reason. Well, you pick the right body and then you lay down beside it, and the lamas would inject a substance in the apparently dead body and gently they would lift you and put you face down on that body. Gradually, over a period of five minutes or so, you would disappear, you would get fainter and fainter, and then all of a sudden the figure in the stone coffin would give a jerk and sit upright and make some sort of explanation, 'Oh, where am I? How did I get here?' For a time, you see, they have the memory of the last person to use that body, but within a matter of twelve hours the body that you had taken would appear to be absolutely normal, and would indeed be capable of all the things that you could do if you were on Earth in your own body. We do this because sometimes we cannot afford to risk damaging the real body. These simulacrum bodies, well, it doesn't matter what happens to them, they've only got to find someone with the right conditions about them and then we could put the body in a stone coffin and let the life force drift away to another plane of existence. People were never forced into it, you know, it was always with their full knowledge and consent.

"Later on you will inhabit one of these bodies for a year less a day. The day is because the bodies would only last three hundred and sixty-five days without having certain intricate things happen to it. So it is better to have the takeover to last a year less one day. And then—well, the body which you are still occupying would get into the stone coffin, shuddering at the coldness of it, and gradually your astral form would emerge from the substitute body and would enter your own body and take over all its functions, all its thoughts, and all its knowledge. And on that now would be superimposed all the knowledge that you had gained during the past three hundred and sixty four days.

"Atlantis used to be a great exponent of this system. They had a great number of these bodies which were constantly being taken over by some super person who wanted to get a certain bit of experience. Then, having got the experience, they would come back and claim their own body and leave the substitute for the next person."

"But Master, I am honestly puzzled indeed by this because if a Gardener of the World has all these powers then why cannot he just look east or west or south or north and see what is going on? Why all this rigmarole of occupying a

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substitute body?"

"Lobsang, you are being dim. We can't afford to have the real high personage damaged, we cannot have his body damaged, and so we provide him with a substitute body, and if an arm or a leg be taken off that's just too bad, but it does not hurt the high entity who took over the body. Let me tell it to you like this; inside one's head there is a brain. Now that brain is blind, deaf, and dumb. It can only go about animalistic procedures, and it has no real knowledge of what it feels like. For an illustration let us say that the very high entity So-and-So wanted to experience what it was like to be burned. Well, in his own body he would not be able to get down to the rough, crude vibrations necessary for one to feel the burn, but in this lower entity body—yes, burns can be felt, so the super-entity enters the substitute body and then the necessary conditions occur and perhaps the super-entity can get to know what it is like through the experience of its substitute. The body can see, the brain cannot. The body can hear, the brain cannot. The body can experience love, hatred, and all those sort of emotions, but the super-entity cannot so it has to get the knowledge by proxy."

"Then all these bodies are all alive and ready to be used by anyone who comes along?" I asked.

"Oh no, oh no, far from that. You cannot enter the entity into the body if it is for the wrong purpose. The super-entity must have an absolutely authentic good reason for wanting to take over a body, it cannot be done from his sexual interests or his money interests because they do not help in the advancement of anyone on the world. It usually happens that there is some task being done by the Gardeners of the World, it is a difficult task because being super brains they can't feel things, they can't see things, so they make arrangements for an appropriate number of them (the super brains) to take over a body and come down to Earth and pose as earthlings. I always say that the biggest trouble is the awful smell with these bodies. They smell like hot, rotting meat, and it might take one half day before one can overcome the nausea occasioned by such a takeover. So there really is no way in which a super-entity who possibly has gone wrong somewhere can victimize the substitute body. It can watch what others are doing, obviously, but nothing can be done which will harm the super-entity."

"Well, all this is a terrific puzzle for me because if a super-entity is going to wait until a body is perhaps thirty years of age what is going to happen about the Silver Cord? It's obvious that the Silver Cord is not just cut off, or I suppose the body-in-waiting would just decay ."

"No, no, no, Lobsang," the Lama replied. "These substitute bodies have

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a form of Silver Cord which leads to a source of energy which keeps the way open for the body to be occupied. This is known in most religions of the world. The Silver Cord is by metaphysical means connected to a central source, and the people who look after these bodies can assess their condition through the Silver Cord, and they can add nourishment or take away nourishment, depending on the condition of the body.”

I shook my head, baffled, and said, “Well, how is it that some people have the Silver Cord emerging from the top of the head while others have it emerging from the umbilicus? Does it mean that one is better than the other? Does it mean that the belly button exit for the cord is for those not so evolved?”

“No, no, not at all, it doesn’t matter in the slightest where the Silver Cord emerges. If you were of a certain type you could have a Silver Cord emerging from, say, your big toe as long as the contact is made, that is all that matters. And as long as the contact is made and kept in good order the body lives on in a state of what we call stasis. That means that everything is still. The body organs are functioning at their very, very slowest, and throughout the whole of a year a body will consume less than one bowl of tsampa. You see, we have to do it that way or else we should be forever traipsing along these mountain tunnels making sure that a body is being properly looked after, and if we had people come here to feed the bodies then it would actually do harm to the body because a person could live under stasis for several million years provided it has the necessary attention. And that necessary attention can, and is, given by way of the Silver Cord.”

“Then can a great Entity come down and have a look to see what sort of body the super one is going to occupy?”

“No,” said the Lama. “If the Entity who is going to take over a body saw the body unoccupied he wouldn’t dream of entering such an ugly looking thing. Look—come with me, and we will go into the Hall of Coffins.”

So saying he picked up his books and his staff, and rose to his feet rather shakily.

“I think we should look at your legs first, you know, because you appear to be in considerable pain.”

“No, Lobsang, let’s have a look at these coffins first, and then I promise you we will do my legs.”

Together we walked along fairly slowly, the Lama consulting his chart every so often, and then at last he said. “Ah! We take the next turning left and the next turning left again, and there is the door which we must enter.”

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We trudged on up the path and turned to the left, and took the first turning left again. And there was the door, a great door looking as though made of beaten gold. As we approached a light outside the door flickered on and then steadied into constant light, and the door swung open. We went inside, and I stopped a moment taking in the rather gruesome sight. It was a wonderfully appointed room with a lot of posts and rails. "This is for a newly awakened body to hang on to, Lobsang," said the Lama. "Most times they are a bit giddy when they are awakened, and it is rather a nuisance to have one just awakened fall flat on his face and mar his features so much that he cannot be used for some time. It upsets all one's arrangements, and then perhaps we have to get a different body and a different entity, and that makes a lot of extra work. None of us appreciate that in the slightest. But come over here and look at this body."

Reluctantly I went over to where the Lama beckoned. I wasn't fond of seeing dead bodies, it made me wonder why humans had such a short life-span, short indeed when you know of a tree which is about four thousand years old.

I looked into the stone coffin and there was a nude man there. On his body he had a number of well, it looked like needles with thin wires coming from them, and as I watched every so often the body would give a twitch and a little jump, a most eerie sight indeed.

As I watched he opened sightless eyes and closed them again. The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "We must leave this room now because this man is going to be occupied very, very soon, and it is disturbing for all of them if there are intrusions about." He turned and walked out of the room. I gave a last look around, and then I followed quite reluctantly because the people in the stone coffins, men and women, were quite nude and I wondered what a woman would be doing occupying one of these bodies.

"I am picking up your thoughts, Lobsang," said the Lama, "why shouldn't a woman be used for some things? You must have a woman because there are some places where men cannot enter just as there are certain places where women cannot enter. But let us move a little more quickly because we do not want to delay the waiting super—Entity."

We moved a bit more quickly, and then the Lama said, "You seem to have quite a lot of questions, you know, why not ask them because you are going to be a super-Lama and you have to learn an incredible amount, things which are taught to about only one in a million of the priesthood."

"Well," I said, "when the super-Entity has entered the guest body what happens then? Does he rush out to get a jolly good meal? I'm sure I would!"

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The Lama laughed and replied, "No, he doesn't rush anywhere, he is not hungry because the substitute body has been kept fed and well nourished, ready for immediate occupancy."

"I can't see the point of it, though, Master. I mean, a super-Entity one would think he would enter a body which had just been born instead of all this messing about with dead bodies which are like zombies."

"Lobsang, just think for yourself. A baby has several years before it learns a thing, and it has to go to a school, it has to be subject to parental discipline and that is a real time waster. It wastes perhaps thirty or forty years, whereas if the body can do all that and then come to these coffins, then indeed he is worth much more, he knows all the conditions of life in his own part of the world, and he doesn't have to spend years waiting and learning, and not being at all sure of what it is all about."

"I have had experiences already," I said, "and things that have happened to me—well, they don't seem to have any sense in them. Possibly I shall get some enlightenment before we leave this place. And, anyhow, why is it that humans have such a terribly short life-span? We read about some of the Sages, the really wise people, and they seem to have lived one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred years, and still look young."

"Well, Lobsang, it is just as well to tell you now, I am over four hundred years of age, and I can tell you exactly why humans have such a terribly short life.

"Several million years ago, when this globe was in its infancy, a planet came very close and almost hit this world, in fact it was driven out of its orbit because of the antimagnetic impulses from the other world. But the other planet did collide with a small planet which it shattered into pieces which are now known as the asteroid belt. We shall deal with that more extensively a bit later on. For the present let me tell you that when this world was in formation there were tremendous volcanoes all over the place, and they were pouring out gouts of lava and smoke. Now, the smoke rose up and formed heavy clouds all around the Earth. This world was not meant to be a sunshine world at all. You see, sunlight is poisonous, sunlight has deadly rays which are very harmful to a human being. Well, the rays are harmful to all creatures. But the cloud cover made the world like a greenhouse, all the good rays could come through but the bad rays were shut out, and people used to live for hundreds of years. But when the rogue planet came so close it swept away all the clouds covering this Earth, and in the space of two generations people had a life-span of three score and ten. In other words, seventy years.

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"The other planet, when it collided and destroyed the smaller world to form the asteroid belt, spilled its seas onto this world. Now, we have water forming our seas, but this other world had a very different sort of sea, it was a petroleum sea, and without that collision this world would have had no petroleum products and that would have been a very good thing because nowadays drugs are taken from petroleum and many of the drugs are harmful things indeed. But there it is, we just have to live with it. In those early days all the seas were contaminated with the petroleum products, but in time that petroleum sank down through the seas and through the sea beds and it was, collected in great rock basins, basins which were the result of volcanic influences under the sea bed.

"In time the petroleum will be quite exhausted because the type of petroleum available now is of a type harmful to Man, its combustion causes a lethal gas to be formed. That causes many, many deaths, and it also causes pregnant women to produce sickly children and even, in some cases, monsters. We shall see some of these very shortly because there are other chambers we are going to visit. You will be able to see all this in the third dimensional stage. Now, I know you are bursting to find out how photographs could be taken a billion years ago. The answer is that there are tremendous civilizations in this Universe, and in those days they had photographic equipment which could penetrate the deepest fog or the darkest darkness, and so photographs were taken. Then, after a time, the super-science people came to this Earth, and they saw people dying like flies, one could say, because if people can only live until seventy years of age that is very short indeed and does not give one the opportunity to learn as much as one should."

I listened with rapt attention. I found all this utterly fascinating, and in my opinion the Lama Mingyar Dondup was the cleverest man in Tibet.

The Lama said, "We here on the surface of the Earth know only half the world because this world is hollow, as many worlds are, as the Moon is, and there are people living inside. Now some people deny that the Earth is hollow, but I know it is from personal experience because I have been there. One of the biggest difficulties is that scientists all over the world deny the existence of anything which THEY did not discover. They say it is not possible for people to live inside the Earth, they say it is not possible for a person to live several hundred years, and they say it is not possible that the cloud coverage, when swept away, caused the life-span to shorten. But it is actually so. Scientists, you see, always go by text books which convey information which is about a hundred years old by the time it reaches the classrooms, and places like this—this cavern where we are now—were put here specially by the wisest men who lived, The Gardeners of the Earth could get ill just the same as the native hu-

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mans, and some-times an operation was necessary, an operation which could not be performed on Earth, so the sufferer was put into a state of suspended animation and sealed up in a plastic case. Then the medical men in the caves would send special etheric messages for a hospital space ship, and the hospital space ship would quickly come down and take away the containers with the people who were ill sealed inside. Then they could either be operated upon in space or taken back to their homebased world.

"You see, it is easy to travel at a speed much in excess of light. Some people used to say, 'Oh, if you travel at thirty miles an hour it will kill you because the air pressure would blow out your lungs.' And then, when that was proved false, people used to say, 'Oh, Man will never travel at sixty miles an hour, it would kill them.' And then the next statement was that people would never travel at a speed faster than the speed of sound, and now they are saying nothing can ever travel faster than light. Light has a speed, you know, Lobsang. It is composed of the vibrations which, emanating from some object, has its impact upon the human eyes, and the human eyes see what the object is. But quite definitely, within just a few years, people will be travelling at many times the speed of light, as do the visitors here in their special space ships. The ship outside in the other chamber, that was just getting ready to take off when the mountain quaked and sealed the exit. And, of course, immediately that happened all the air in that chamber was exhausted automatically and the people aboard were in a state of suspended animation, but they had been in suspended animation so long that if we tried to revive them now they would probably be quite insane. That is because certain highly sensitive portions of their brains would have been deprived of oxygen, and without oxygen they die, and the person who has such a dead brain—well, they are not worth keeping alive, they are no longer human. But I am talking too much, Lobsang. Let's go and look at some of the other rooms."

"Master, I would like to see your leg first because we have here the means of healing it quickly and it seems wrong to me that you should suffer when, through this super-science, you can be cured very, very quickly."

"All right then, Lobsang, my budding doctor. Let us go back to the place of health, and we will have a look at my leg and see what we can do."

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CHAPTER FIVE

We walked along the corridor which separated room from room outside the main chamber, and soon we came to the "medical health room." In we went, and on came the lights as bright as before. The place looked untouched, there was no sign that we had been there previously, no sign that our dust covered feet had left tracks, it looked as if the floor had been newly polished and the metal fittings around the central pool newly burnished. We observed that just in passing, and it stirred in my mind a thought of more questions, but first of all, "Master, will you put your legs in the pool now, and then I will take off these bandages."

The Lama swung his legs into the pool and sat on the tiled edge. I got in, and unwound the bandages. As I got down near the flesh I felt sick—sick. The bandages here were yellow and thoroughly beastly looking.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Lobsang? You look as if you have had too much strange food to eat."

"Oh, Master, your legs are so bad, I think we shall have to try to get monks to come and carry you back to Chakpori," I said.

"Lobsang, things are not always what they seem. Take off all the bandage, take off all the wrappings, do it with your eyes shut if you like, or perhaps I should do it myself."

I got to the end of the bandage, and I found that I should not be able to take that off because it was stuck in a perfectly horrible, gooey, scabious mess from which I recoiled. But the Lama reached down for the bundle of bandage and gave quite a tug, and the end came away with syrupy strings of something dangling from it. Without turning a hair he just tossed the bandages down on the flooring, and said, "Well now, I am going to press this valve and then the pool will fill. I had it turned off before because, obviously, we didn't want you

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undoing bandages when you are up to your waist in water. You get out of the pool and I will turn the water on faster."

I hastily clambered out, and took a look at those horrid legs. If we had been in Chakpori or somewhere like that I think both of them would have been amputated, and what a thing that would be for the Lama Mingyar Dondup, always travelling around to do good for someone. But as I looked slabs of stuff fell off his legs, slabs of bilious yellow and green material fell off his legs and floated on the surface of the pool. The Lama hitched himself a bit higher out of the water and then turned the valve on more so the water level rose and the floating material floated out through what I suppose was an overflow device.

He looked at the book again, and then made certain adjustments to a bunch of—well, I can only call them valves, they were different coloured valves, and I saw the water changing colour and there was a very medicinal odour on the air. I looked at his legs again, and now they were showing pink, pink like on a newborn baby. And then he hoisted his robe a bit higher, and went a bit further down the sloping bottom so that the healing water went half way up his thighs. There he stood. Sometimes he would stand still, sometimes he would walk slowly around, but all the time the legs were healing. They went from an angry pink to a healthy pink, and at last there was no trace of the yellow scab, no trace at all, it had gone completely, and I looked up from his legs to take a look at the bandages I had taken off. I felt my scalp tingle; the bandages had gone, no trace of them, not a mark, they had just gone, and I was so shocked and astonished that involuntarily

I sat down forgetting I was in the water, medicated water at that. When sitting down in the lotus position, well, if one is doing it in water one should keep one's mouth shut, the taste was horrible! And yet it wasn't, it was pleasant. I found that a tooth which had been giving me some trouble since I fell sometime before ceased to trouble me, I could feel it in my mouth. I stood up quickly and spat over the edge of the pool, yes there was the tooth, it was cracked in half. Now it lay there in front of me, and I said to myself, "There! Blast you, now you go and ache as much as you like!"

As I looked at the tooth I saw an absolutely weird sight. The tooth was moving, moving towards the nearest wall, and as it touched the wall it disappeared. There I stood like a fool, dripping with water from my shaven scalp to my bare feet, trying to look at some- thing that wasn't there.

I turned around to ask the Lama Mingyar Dondup if he had seen it, and he was standing over a certain place on the floor where the tiling was of different colour, and warm healing air was coming out of the floor and he was soon dry. "Your turn, Lobsang," said the Lama. "You look like a half drowned fish, so

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you'd better come over here and get yourself dry."

Truth to tell I did feel like a half drowned fish, and then I thought, well, how can a fish be half drowned when it lives in water. So I asked the Lama how it could be, and his reply was, "Yes, it is perfectly true, one can take a fish from the water and its gills start to dry immediately. If you put it back in the water it will actually drown. We do not know the mechanism of it, but we know it to be a fact. But you look a lot better now you have been on that healing pad, you were looking worn out before and now you look as if you could run a hundred miles."

I went across and looked at his legs at closer quarters, and even as I looked the pinkness started to disappear and his legs soon returned to their ordinary natural color, and there was no trace at all that only an hour before the flesh had been almost stripped from his bones. Here were his legs, healthy, fresh-looking, and I had been thinking how they would be amputated!

"Master," I said, "there are so many questions that I am almost ashamed to ask you for the answers, but I cannot understand how food and drink which has been here for endless years can still be quite fresh and quite potable. Even in our ice refrigerator meat gradually goes bad, so how can it be that this place, millions of years of age, can be as new as though it were built only yesterday?"

"We live in a peculiar age, Lobsang, an age where no man trusts another man. Sometime ago people in a white country absolutely refused to believe that there were black people and yellow people, it was just too fantastic to be believed, and then some people traveling to another country saw men on horseback. Now, they had never seen horses before, they did not know there was such a thing as a horse, so they fled, and when they went back to their own country they said they had seen a man-horse, a centaur. But even when it was known that horses were animals which could be ridden by men, still many people disbelieved it and they thought that the horse was a special sort of human changed into an animal's form. There are so many things like that. People will not believe that anything new can be, unless they themselves have actually seen it, touched it, and pulled it to pieces. Here we are reaping the fruits of a very, very high civilization indeed, not one of the Atlantises because, as I told you, Atlantis is only the word for the disappearing land. No, these places go back far, far beyond Atlantis, and there is an automatic means of stopping all development, all growth, until a human comes within a certain range. So if no human came here again this place would remain just as it is now, impregnable and without any signs of corruption or dissolution. But if people come and use the place as we have done, then after a number of such users the place would deteriorate, it would age. Fortunately we are in one which has been very, very

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rarely used, in fact it has been used only twice since it was made."

"Master, how can you possibly tell that only twice has this place been used?"

The Lama pointed up to something dangling from the ceiling. "There," he said, "if anyone passes beyond that it shows in figures, and this one shows the figure 3. The last one is you and me. When we leave, and it won't be for three or four days, the time of our stay will be recorded ready for the next people to enter and to speculate upon who was here before them. But you know, Lobsang, I am trying to get you to realize that the degree of civilization when this place was built was the highest which has ever been attained on this world. You see, first of all they were the Guardians of the World, the Gardeners of the World. Their civilization was such that they could melt rock—even the hardest rock—and leave it with a glasslike finish, and the melting would be what we term a cold melt, that is, no heat would be generated. So a place could be used immediately."

"But I really cannot understand why these so highly civilized people should want to live inside mountain ranges. You told me that this mountain range extends all the way across the world, and so why should they hide themselves?" I asked.

"The best thing we can do is to go to the room of the past, the present, and the future. This is the store of knowledge of all that has happened in the world. The history you have learned in classes is not always true, it has been altered in its recording to suit the king or dictator in power at the time. Some of these people want to be known as their reign being of the Golden Age. But seeing the actual thing, the actual Akashic Record—well, then one can't go wrong.

"Did you say the Akashic Record, Master? I thought that we could only see that when we were in the astral plane. I did not know that we could come to the mountains and see all that had happened," I said.

"Oh yes, you forget that things can be copied. We have reached a certain stage of civilization, we think we are shockingly clever and we wonder if anyone will ever be cleverer, but come along with me and I will show you the actual truth. Come along, it is quite a little walk, but the exercise will do you good."

"Master, isn't there some way that I can avoid you walking? Isn't there something like a sled? Or could I pull you if you were sitting on a stout piece of cloth?"

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"No, no thank you, Lobsang, I am quite capable of walking the distance, in fact that exercise may be good for me as well. So let us set out."

We did "set out" and I should have liked to investigate some of the interesting things. I was vastly intrigued with the doors, each with an inscription engraved on the door itself. "All these rooms, Lobsang; are devoted to different sciences, sciences which have never yet been heard of on this world because here we are like blind people trying to find the way, in a house with many corridors. But I am as a sighted person because I can read these inscriptions and, as I told you, I have had experience of these caves before."

At last we came to an apparently blank wall. There was a door to the left, and a door to the right, but the Lama Mingyar Dondup ignored them and instead he stood right in front of that blank wall and uttered a most peculiar sound in an authoritative tone. Immediately, without a sound, the blank space split down the middle and the two halves disappeared into the sides of the corridor. Inside there was just a faint light showing, a glimmering as of starlight. We went in to the room and it seemed as large as the world.

With a very slight sigh the two halves of the door slid across the corridor and this time we were at the opposite side of the apparently blank wall.

The light brightened somewhat so that we could dimly see a great globe floating in space. It was more pear-shaped than round, and there were flashes from both ends of the globe. "These flashes are the magnetic fields of the world. You will learn all about that a bit later."

I stood with mouth agape, there seemed to be shimmering curtains of ever-changing light around the poles, they seemed to undulate and flow from one end to the other, but with a very great weakening of colours round about the equator.

The Lama said some words, words in a language unknown to me. Immediately there came the light of faint dawn, like the light which comes at the birth of a new day, and I felt like one who had just sat up now awakened from a dream.

But it was no dream, as I soon found. The Master said, "We will sit over here because this is a console with which the ages of the world can be varied. You are not in the third dimension now, remember, here you are in the fourth dimension, and few people can live through that. So if you feel in any way upset or ill then tell me quickly and I can put you right."

I could dimly see the Lama's right hand reached out and ready to turn a button. Then he turned to me again and said, "Are you sure you feel all right,

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Lobsang? No feeling of nausea, no feeling of sickness?"

"No, sir, I feel just fine and absolutely fascinated, and I am wondering what we shall see first."

"Well, first of all we have to see the formation of the world, and then the arrival of the Gardeners of the World. They will come and look around, survey the place and all that, and then they will go away to plan, and later still you will see them arrive in a huge space- ship because that is really what the Moon is."

Suddenly all was dark, the darkest darkness that I had ever experienced, even on a moonless night there had been dim starlight, and even in a closed room with no windows there was still an impression of a little light. But here there was nothingness, not a thing. And then I nearly jumped off my seat, I nearly jumped out of my robe with fright; with incredible speed two faint dots of light were coming together, and they hit, they collided, and then the screen was filled with light. I could see swirling gases and smokes of different colours, and then the whole screen, the whole globe filled everything. I could see rivers of fire running down from flame-belching volcanos. The atmosphere was almost turgid. I was aware, but dimly, that I was watching something and that I wasn't actually there in person.

So I watched and was more and more fascinated as the world shrank a little and the volcanos became less, but the seas were still smoking with the hot lava which had poured in. There was nothing except rocks and water. There was only one stretch of land, not a very large stretch of land, but just one solid lump, and it gave to the globe a peculiar erratic motion. It did not follow a circular path but seemed to be following a path which some shaky child had drawn.

Gradually as I watched the world became rounder and cooler. Still there was nothing but rock and water, and terrible storms which raged across the surface. The wind pushed over the tops of mountains, and those tops fell down the mountain sides and were ground into dust.

Time elapsed, and by now the Earth covered part of the world because the Earth itself was made by the ground up dust from the mountains. The land heaved and shook, and from certain parts there came great gouts of smoke and steam, and as I watched I saw a section of land suddenly break off from the main continental mass. It broke off and for seconds it seemed to hang on to the main mass in a vain hope of being reunited. I could see animals slithering down the sloping banks and falling into the steaming water. Then the broken piece cracked more, it broke off completely and disappeared beneath the waves.

Somehow I found that I could see the other side of the world at the same

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time, and I saw, to my unutterable amazement, land rising out of the sea. It rose up like a giant hand rising it, it rose up, shook a bit, and then quivered to a standstill. This land, of course, was just rock, not a plant, not a blade of grass, and nothing like trees. And then, as I watched, a mountain nearby burst into flames, lurid flames, red, yellow and blue, and then there came a flow of lava, white hot, flowing like a stream of hot water. But as soon as it touched the water it jelled and solidified, and soon the surface of the bare rock was covered by a rapidly cooling mass of the yellow-blue.

I looked up in wonder, and I wondered where my Guide had gone. He was there just behind me, and he said, "Very interesting, Lobsang, very interesting, eh? We want to see a lot more so we will skip the bit where the barren earth shook and writhed under the cooling by space. When we return we shall see the first types of vegetation."

I sat back in my chair, and I was absolutely amazed. Was this really happening? I seemed to be a God looking down at the birth of the world. I felt "peculiar" because this world in front of me seemed larger than the world I knew, and I—well, I seemed to be possessed of remarkable powers of vision. I could see the flames eating out the centre of the world so that it would be a hollow world, something like a ball, and all the time as I watched there fell upon the surface of the Earth meteorites, cosmic dust, and strange, strange things. Before me, quite within my touch, I thought, there fell some machine. I could not believe this at all because the machine was ripped open and bodies fell out, bodies and machinery, and I thought to myself, "In some future Age someone might come across this wreckage and wonder what caused it, wonder what it was." My Guide spoke, "Yes, Lobsang, that's already been done. In this present Age coal miners have come across truly remarkable things. Artifacts of a skill unknown on this Earth, and then also there has come to light in coal some very strange instruments, and in one ease the complete skeleton of a very tall, very big man. You, Lobsang, and I are the only ones to see this because before the machine was quite completed the Gods known as the Gardeners of the World had quarreled over women, and so we can only see the formation of this, our Earth. If the machine had been completed we would have been able to see on other worlds as well. Wouldn't that have been a marvelous thing?"

The meteorites rained down raising splashes of water when they touched that liquid, and causing bad indentation when they hit rock or the rudimentary soil which at that time covered the Earth.

The Lama moved his hand to another button-switches, I suppose they were really called—and the action speeded up so fast that I could not see what

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it was, and then it slowed down again. I saw a lush surface on the world. There were vast ferns larger than trees towering up toward the sky, the sky now covered with purple cloud, and causing the air itself to be of a purple hue. It was fascinating at first to see a creature breathing in and then exhaling what looked like purple smoke. But I soon got tired of that, or soon got accustomed to it, and I looked further. There were ghastly monsters, incredible things which trod their stolid way through marshlands and bog. It seemed as if nothing could stop them. One vast creature—I haven't the vaguest idea what it was called—came across a whole group of slightly smaller creatures. They would not move, and the larger one would not stop so he just lowered his head and with a massive spike of bone on what I suppose was his nose he just ripped his way through the other animals. The damp soil was strewn with blood, intestines, and other things of a like nature, and as these parts of the animals fell to the ground there emerged from the water peculiar things with six legs and jaws shaped like two shovels. These things tucked in to all the food they found, and then looked about them for more. Yes, there was one of their members who had fallen over a log, or something, and broken a leg. The others all set upon him and ate him alive, leaving only the bones to bear evidence of what had happened. But soon the bones were covered with foliage which had grown, flourished and withered, and fallen to the ground. Millions of years later this would be a coal seam and the bones of the animal would be dug up and be a seven day wonder.

The world spun on, faster now because things were developing more quickly. The Lama Mingyar Dondup stretched out to another switch and with his left elbow he jabbed me in the ribs and said, "Lobsang, Lobsang, are you sure you are not asleep? This you must see. Now stay awake and watch." He switched on whatever it was, it might be called a picture but it was three dimensional, one could get behind it without any apparent effort. The Lama dug me in the ribs and pointed up at the purple sky. There was the gleam of silver, a long silver tube closed at both ends was slowly descending. At last it was clear of the purple clouds, and it hovered many feet above the land, and then, as though it had come to a sudden great decision, it dropped gently to the surface of the world. For a few minutes it just stayed there, motionless. One had the impression of some wary animal looking about before leaving the safety of its covering.

At last the creature seemed to be satisfied, and a great section of metal fell from the side and hit the ground with a soggy clang. A number of peculiar creatures appeared in the opening and looked about them. They were about twice the height of a tall man, and twice as broad, but they seemed to be covered in some sort of garment which covered them from head to foot. The head part was quite transparent. We could see the stern, autocratic faces of the people

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inside. They seemed to be poring over a map and making notations as they did so.

At last they decided that everything was all right, and so one by one they dropped on to the big piece of metal which had fallen to the ground but which yet remained attached to the vessel by one side. These men were covered in some sort of sheath or protective clothing. One of the men—I guessed that they were men although it was hard to say through all the smoke and the difficulty of seeing past their transparent head-pieces—but one of them stepped off the big sheet of metal and fell flat on his face in the murk. Almost before he had touched the surface vile looking creatures dashed out of the vegetation and attacked him. His comrades lost no time in producing some sort of a weapon from the belt they wore. Quickly the man was pulled back onto the sheet of metal, and it was seen that the covering of the body was badly torn, apparently by animals, and red blood was flowing. Two of the men carried him aboard the ship, or whatever it was, and several minutes later they came out again carrying something in their hands. They stood on the metal sheet and both pushed a button on an instrument that they were carrying, and flame came out from a pointed nozzle. All the insect things on the sheet curled up into a burning crisp, and were swept off the metal sheet which then closed up into the body of the ship.

The men with the flames moved cautiously around playing the flames on the floor or on the ground, and burning quite a swathe of earth on one side of the ship. Then they switched off their flames and hurried after the other men who had gone through a forest of ferns. These ferns were as big as big trees, and it was easy to follow the passage of men through them because apparently they had some sort of cutting device which just swung from side to side and cut the fern down almost to ground level. I decided I must try to see what it was they were doing.

I moved from my seat and went a little way left. There I got a better viewpoint because now I could see the men apparently coming toward me. In front of the other men two men held some machine which glided along and cut down all the fern that got in its way. It seemed to have a rotating blade, and soon they broke through the forest of fern and found an open space in which a number of animals were gathered. The animals looked at the men and the men looked at the animals. One man thought he would test their aggressiveness so he pointed a metal tube at them and pulled on a little spur of metal. There was a tremendous explosion, and the animal at which the weapon had been pointed just fell to pieces, just collapsed. It reminded me of a monk who had fallen from the top of a mountain, every-thing was so scattered. But of the other animals there was no sign, they took off too quickly.

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"We'd better move on a bit, Lobsang, we've got a lot of ground to cover and we will speed up for about a thousand years." The Lama moved one of those switch knobs, and everything in the globe swirled around like a whirlpool, and eventually it came to its natural rate of rotation.

"This is a more suitable time, Lobsang. You'd better observe carefully because we will see how these caves were made."

We looked very carefully and we saw a very low ridge of hills, and as they revolved closer to us we saw that it was rock, rock covered in green mossy material, except for the very top, and that top just showed bare rock.

Off to one side we saw some strange houses, they seemed to be half round. If you cut a ball in half and you put the half that has been cut on the ground then you would have some idea of what these buildings were like. We looked at them and saw people moving about. They were clad in some material which clung to their bodies and left no doubt as to which sex was which. But now they had the transparent headpiece off, and they were talking to each other and there seemed to be quite a lot of quarrelling going on. One of the men was apparently the chief; he brusquely gave some orders and a machine came out of one of the shelter places and moved toward the rocky ridge. One of the men moved forward and sat on a metal seat at the back of the machine. Then the machine moved forward, emitting "something" from nozzles all along the front, the forward part, the bottom and the sides, and as the machine moved slowly forward the rock melted, and seemed to shrink inside itself. The machine emitted ample light so we could see it was boring a tunnel right into the living rock. It moved on and on, and then it started to circle and in the space of a few hours it had excavated the big cave into which we first entered. It was an immense cave, and we could see that it was really a hutment or hangarage for some of their machines which were flying about all the time. It all seemed most puzzling to us. We forgot all about time, we forgot all about being hungry or thirsty, and then, when the great chamber was finished, the machine followed a path which had apparently been marked on the floor and that path was converted into one of the corridors. It went on and on and on, out of our sight, but then other machines came in and in the corridors they excavated rooms of different sizes. They seemed to melt the rock. It seemed just to melt and then push its way back leaving a surface as smooth as glass. There was no dust and no dirt, just this gleaming surface.

As the machines did their work, gangs of men and women moved into the rooms carrying boxes and boxes and more boxes, but the boxes all seemed to float in the air. Certainly they were no effort to lift. But an overseer stood in the centre of a room and pointed to where each box should be deposited. Then

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when the room had its full complement of the boxes the workers started unpacking some of them. There were strange machines and all manner of curious objects, one I recognized as being a microscope. I had seen a very crude one before because at one time the Dalai Lama had been given one from Germany, and so I knew the principal of the thing.

We were attracted by a brawl which seemed to be taking place. It was as if some of the men and women were opposed to the other men and women. There was much shouting, much gesticulation, and at last a whole collection of men and women got into some of these vehicles which traveled through the air. They said no good-byes or anything like that, they just got inside and a door was closed, and the machines went up into the air.

A few days later—the days according to the speed of the globe we were watching—a number of the ships came back, and they hovered above the encampment. Then the bottom of the ships opened and things fell out. We looked and we could see people running with desperate speed away from where the things would fall. Then they threw themselves flat on the ground as the first object hit the ground and exploded in a violent brilliant flash of purple. We had difficulty in seeing because we were absolutely dazzled by the brilliant flash, but then from the forest of ferns there came thin shafts of brilliant light. They moved about, and one of the shafts struck one of the machines in the air. Immediately it vanished in a burst of flame.

"You see, Lobsang, even the Gardeners of the Earth had their problems, their problems were sex, there were too many men and too few women, and when men have been away from women for a long time—well, they get lustful and they resort to great violence. There is no point in us watching this because it is just a case of murder and rape." After a time a lot of the ships departed, apparently to their mother ship which was circling the globe far out in space. After some days a number of big ships came and landed, and heavily armoured men came out and they started hunting their fellows through the foliage. Whoever they saw they shot without asking any questions, shot, that is, if the person was male. If she was female they captured her and carried her off to one of the ships.

We had to stop. The pangs of hunger and thirst were pressing too much. So we had our ordinary tsampa and water, and having got through that and done a few other things we returned to the chamber which had the globe which appeared to be the world. The Lama Mingyar Dondup switched on something, and we saw the world again. There were creatures on it now, creatures about four feet tall and very, very bandy. They had weapons of a sort consisting of a piece of stick at one end of which was lashed a sharp stone which they made

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sharper by chipping away and chipping away until there was a really sharp edge. There were a number of the men making these weapons, and others were making weapons of a different kind. They seemed to have a strip of leather; and in it they placed large stones. Two men drew back the leather loop which was saturated in water to make it stretchable, and they together released the loop. A stone would go soaring away towards the enemy.

But we were more interested in seeing how civilizations changed, so the Lama Mingyar Dondup worked his controls again and everything became obscure in the globe. It seemed to be several minutes before there was a gradual lightening as of the dawn slowly appearing, and then there was normal daylight again and we saw a mighty city with tall spires and minarets.

From tower to tower there stretched flimsy looking bridges. It was a marvel to me that they could support themselves let alone take traffic, but then I saw that all the traffic was aerial traffic. Of course, a few people walked about on the bridges and on the different levels of street, but then all of a sudden we heard a thunderous roar. It did not dawn on us for a moment that it came from the three dimensional globe, but we looked intently and we could see minute specks coming towards the city. Just before reaching the city the minute specks circled and dropped things from their under-sides.

The mighty city collapsed. The towers were shorn off, the bridges crumpled up like pieces of string too knotted and twisted to be of any use.

We saw bodies falling out of the higher buildings. We guessed they must have been the leading citizens because of their dress and because of the quality of the furnishings which fell with them.

We looked on dumbly. We saw another lot of little dark dots coming from the other direction, and they engaged the invading dots with unparalleled ferocity. They seemed to have no regard at all for their own life, they would shoot things at the enemy and if that failed to bring them down then the defenders would dive direct on to these—well, I can only call them big bombers.

The day ended and night fell upon the scene. The night lightened by mighty flares as the city burned. Flames were breaking out everywhere, from the other side of the globe we could see cities there in flames, and when the light of an early dawn shone upon the scene with the blood-red sun following on we saw just heaps of wreckage, just piles of dust, and distorted metalwork.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Let us skip a bit, we don't want to see all this, Lobsang, because you, my poor friend, will be seeing this in actual life before your span on this world is terminated."

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The globe that was the world spun on. Darkness to light, light to darkness, I forgot how many times the globe spun, or perhaps I never did know, but at last the Lama put out his hand and the swirling globe slowed to its normal rate.

We looked carefully this way and that way, and then we saw men with bits of wood in the shape of a plough. Horses were dragging the ploughs through the ground, and we saw building after building just topple, topple into the trench dug by the plough.

For day after day they went on with their ploughing until there was no sign that there had ever been a civilization in this area. The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "I think that is enough for today, Lobsang, our eyes will be too tired to do anything tomorrow, and we want to watch this because this is going to happen time after time until, in the end, battling warriors will almost exterminate all life on the world. So let us just get some food and retire for the night."

I looked up in surprise. "Night, Master?" I said, "But how do we know what time it is?" The Lama pointed to a little square a fair way off the ground, perhaps as tall as three men standing on each others shoulders.

There was a hand there, a pointer, and on what appeared to be a tiled background there were certain divisions of light and darkness, and the hand now was pointing between the lightest light and the darkest dark. "There you are, Lobsang," said the Lama, "a new day has almost started. Still, we have plenty of time to rest. I am going to stand in the fountain of youth again because my legs are hurting quite a bit, I think I must have scraped the bone very badly as well as lacerating the flesh."

"Master, Master," I said, "let me attend to it for you." I sped into the room of the fountain and hoisted up my robes. Then the water started to come, and I moved the little thing which the Lama had called a tap, I moved it so that the water kept on flowing after I got out, and I turned another tap thing which I had been told admitted a lot of medicated paste into the water where it rapidly dissolved and swirled around with the water.

The Lama sat on the edge of the pool, and then swung his legs over and into the water. "Ah!" he said,

"That feels better. This brings great relief, Lobsang, soon my legs will be quite normal again and this will be just something to talk over with wonder."

I rubbed his legs briskly, and little bits of scar tissue came off until at last there was no scar tissue left and his legs again looked normal. "That looks

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better, sir," I said. "Do you think you have had enough for now?"

"Yes, I am sure I have. We don't want to keep at it half the night do we? We will make that do for now and go in search of food." So saying he climbed out of the pool and I turned the big wheel thing which let all the water flow away somewhere. I watched until the basin was quite empty, and then I turned on the tap full just to flush away bits of scar tissue. With that gone I turned the taps off again and went in search of the Lama.

"We've done enough for today, Lobsang," said my Guide. "I vote that we have tsampa and water for our supper, and then we go to sleep. We will eat better in the morning."

So we sat down on the floor in the usual lotus position, and we spooned out the tsampa. Now we felt ultra-sophisticated, we were not taking our tsampa scooped up by our fingers, we were using a civilized implement which, by the illustration in one of the books, was called a spoon. But before I could finish my supper I fell over backwards, dead to the world again, sound asleep, and the world rolled on and on.

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CHAPTER SIX

I sat up suddenly in the darkness, wondering wherever I was. As I sat up the light came on gradually, not like lighting a candle where you get darkness one moment and a glimmer of light the next, this came on like the dawn, so there was no strain to the eyes. I could hear the Lama Mingyar Dondup pottering about in the kitchen. He called out to me and said, "I am preparing breakfast for you, Lobsang, because you will have to eat stuff like this when you move to the Western part of the world, just as well to get used to it now," and he laughed with secret glee.

I got up and started to make my way to the kitchen. Then I thought, no, Nature comes first, and so I reversed my direction of travel so that Nature *could* come first.

With that safely accomplished I went back to the kitchen and the Lama was just putting some stuff on a plate. It was a sort of brownish-reddish stuff, and there were also two eggs, fried, I suppose they were, but in those early days I had never before eaten fried food. So he got me sitting at a table and he stood behind me. "Now, Lobsang, this thing is a fork. You take the fork in your hands and hold down the piece of bacon while you cut it with the knife held in your right hand. Then, having cut it in half, you use the fork to convey the piece of bacon to your mouth."

"What a darn stupid idea," said I, picking up the bacon with finger and thumb and thereby getting a rap across the knuckles from the Lama.

"No, no, no, Lobsang. You are going to the West on a special task, and you've got to live as they live, and for that you've got to learn how to do it now. Pick up that bacon with your fork and convey it to your mouth, and then put it in your mouth and withdraw the fork."

"I can't, sir," I said.

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"Can't? And why cannot you do as I say?" the Lama asked.

"Well, sir, I had that stuff to my mouth and you gave me a rap across the knuckles which made me let go, so I've eaten the wretched stuff."

"You have the other half there, look. Pick it up with your fork and convey it to your mouth. Put it well inside your mouth and then withdraw the fork."

So I did that, but it did seem such a stupid idea. Why should anyone have to have a bit of bent metal to convey food to his mouth? It was about the craziest thing I had heard, but here was even worse; "Now work the concave part of the fork under one of those eggs, and then cut with the knife so that you have about a quarter of the egg on the fork. You then put it to your mouth and eat it."

"Do you mean to say that if I go to the West I've got to eat in this crazy fashion?" I asked the Lama.

"I certainly do mean that, so its just as well for you to get used to it now. Fingers and thumbs are very useful for a certain grade of people, but you are supposed to be superior material. What do you think I am bringing you to a place like this for?"

"Well, sir, we fell in the wretched place by accident!" I said.

"Not so, not so," said the Lama. "We came in by accident, yes, admittedly so, but this was our destination. You see, the old hermit was the Keeper of this place. He had been the Keeper for about fifty years, and I was bringing you to expand your education a bit. But I think that fall on the rock must have knocked all your brains out."

"I wonder how old these egg things are," said the Lama thoughtfully. He put down his knife and fork, and went to the container where the eggs were kept, and I saw him counting noughts. "Lobsang, these eggs and this bacon are about three million years old, and they taste as fresh as if the eggs had been laid only yesterday."

I played about with the egg and the rest of the bacon. I was puzzled. I had seen things decay even when packed in ice, and now I was told I was eating stuff about three million years old. "Master, I have so many puzzlements, and the more you tell me the more questions you raise in my mind. You say these eggs are about three million years old, and I agree with you, they really are like fresh laid eggs, no trace of deterioration, so how is it possible for these to be three million years old?"

"Lobsang," said the Lama, "it would need a very abstruse explanation to really satisfy you about certain of these things, but let us look at it in a way

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which is not strictly accurate but which should give you some idea of what I mean. Now, supposing you have a collection of blocks. These blocks, we will call them cells, can be assembled to form different things. If you were playing as a child you could make block houses from these little cubes, and then you could knock over your house and make something quite different. Well, bacon, eggs or anything else, is composed of little blocks, little cells which have unending life because matter cannot be destroyed. If matter could be destroyed the whole Universe would come to a halt. So Nature arranges that these particular blocks are made into a shape which represents bacon, and those particular blocks represent eggs. Now, if you eat the bacon and the eggs you are not wasting anything because eventually all this passes through you, undergoing chemical changes on the way, and eventually it gets out to the land, or the earth, where it nourishes newly growing plants. And then perhaps a pig or a sheep will come along and eat the plants, and grow bigger. So every- thing depends on these blocks, these cells.

"You may get cells which are oval, and we will say that is the natural type of cell. It enables a person to be built who is shapely, slender, and perhaps tall. That is because the cells, the oval cells are all laid in one direction. But supposing we get a man who loves to eat, who eats far more than he should because one should eat only enough to satisfy one's immediate hunger. But, anyway, this man eats for the love of eating, and his oval cells turn into round cells, the round cells are round because they have been filled up with excess food in the shape of fat. Now, of course, when you get an oval it has a certain length, and then if you make it into the round without increasing its capacity it is of a slightly less length, and so your fat man is shorter than he would be as a thin man."

I sat back on my heels and thought it all out, and then I said, "But what is the good of all these cells unless they contain something which gives life and which makes one able to do something which another person cannot do?"

The Lama laughed at me and replied, "I was giving you a very rough illustration only. There are different sorts of cells. If you get one sort of cell and it is treated properly you might be a genius, but if you get that same sort of cell and you treat it badly then you might be a madman. I am beginning to wonder which you are!"

We had finished our breakfast in spite of the injunction that one should not talk while one is eating. Attention should be paid to the food otherwise it was disrespectful. But I supposed that the Lama knew what he was doing, and perhaps he had special permission to break a few of our laws.

"Let's look about a bit. There are all kinds of strange things to see here, you know, Lobsang, and we want to see the rise and the fall of civilizations.

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Here you can see it precisely, really in the act. But it is not good to be looking into the globe all the time. One needs a change, recreation; recreation means re-creation, it strained by receiving so many pictures very much the same, so you want to turn your eyes away and look at something different. You need a change and that is called re-creation or recreation. Come on into this room." I rose reluctantly to my feet and followed him, dragging my feet with an exaggerated impression of weariness. But the Lama Mingyar Dondup knew all those tricks, he had probably done the same thing to his Guide.

When I reached the door I nearly turned and bolted. There were a lot of people there, men and women. Some of them were naked, and I saw a woman right in front of me, the first naked woman I had every seen and I turned to flee after apologizing to the lady for violating her privacy. But the Lama Mingyar Dondup put his hands on my shoulders, and he was laughing so much that he could hardly speak. "Lobsang, Lobsang! The look on your face was worth all the hardships we have had on this trip. These people are preserved people, they once lived on different planets. They were brought here—alive—to act as specimens. They are still quite alive, you know!"

"But, Master, how can they possibly be alive after a million or two years? Why haven't they crumbled into dust?"

"Well, it's again suspended animation. They are in an invisible cocoon which prevents any of the cells from working. But, you know, you will have to come and examine these figures, men and women, because you are going to have a lot to do with women. You are going to study medicine in Chungking, and later you will have an enormous number of women as your patients. So you'd better get to know them now. Here, for instance, is a woman who was almost ready to give birth to a child, and we might revive her and let the child be born for your edification because what we are doing is of greater importance, and if we have to sacrifice one or two or three people then that is worthwhile if it can save this world with its millions of people."

I looked at the people again and felt myself blushing furiously at the sight of the naked women. "Master, there is a woman over there who is completely black, but how can that be? How can one have an entirely black woman?"

"Well, Lobsang, I must say I am astonished at your amazement over this matter. There are people of many different colours, white, tan, brown, and black, and on some worlds there are blue people and green people. It all depends on what sort of food they and their parents and their grandparents were accustomed to eat. It all depends on a secretion in the body which causes the coloration. But you come and examine these people!"

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The Lama turned and left me, and went into an inner room. I was left with these people who were not dead yet not alive either. Tentatively I touched the arm of the best looking woman there, and it was not ice cold, it was reasonably warm, much about my own temperature except that my temperature had risen considerably over the last few minutes!

A thought occurred to me. "Master, Master, I have an urgent question."

"Ah, Lobsang, I see that you have picked the most beautiful woman in the whole bunch. Well, let me admire your taste. This is a very fine woman, and we wanted the best because some of the old frumps in some museums absolutely repel one. So the people who planned for this collection picked only the best. But what's your question?" He sat down on a low stool, so I did the same.

I said, "How do people grow, how do they grow to resemble their parents? Why don't they come out as a baby and then resemble a horse or any other creature?"

"People are made up of cells. The controlling cells of the body at a very early age are, what I will term, imprinted with the character and general appearance of the parents. So those cells have an absolute memory of what they should look like, but as one gets older each cell forgets just a bit of what the pattern should be. The cells, we will say, 'wander' from the original built-in cell-memory. You may, for instance, have a woman, as you are observing, and she may have been—well—unawakened so that her cells blindly follow the pattern of the cell before. I am telling you all this in the simplest way I can, you will learn more about it at Chakpori, and later at Chungking. But every cell in the body has a definite memory of what it should be like in health. As the body gets older the memory of the original pattern becomes—well—lost or unable, for some reason, to follow the precise pattern, so it diverges slightly from the original cells and then, once having departed from the original pattern, it is easier and easier to forget more and more what the body should look like. We call that aging, and when a body can no longer follow the exact pattern imprinted into the cells then we say that things have deteriorated and the body is mentally sick. After a few more years the change becomes more and more marked, and eventually the person dies."

"But how about people with cancer, how do they manage to get into such a condition?" I asked.

My Guide replied, "We have talked about cells forgetting what pattern they should follow. They forget the pattern which should have been imprinted while the baby was being formed, but we say that when a person has cancer of

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one type then the memory cells become distorted memory cells, and they order fresh growth to occur where there should be no growth. The result of that is, we get in the human body a large mass which interferes with other organs, perhaps pushing them out of place, and perhaps destroying them. But there are different types of cancer. Another type is that in which the cells that should be controlling growth forget that they are meant to produce fresh cells of a certain type and one gets a complete reversal. Certain organs of the body waste away. The cell is worked out, it has done its share of work, of maintaining the body, and now it needs replacing so the body can continue to exist. But the cell has lost the pattern, forgotten the pattern of growth, if you prefer it in that way, and having forgotten it makes a guess and it either builds fresh cells at a frantic rate or it builds cells which devour healthy cells and leave a bleeding, putrid mass inside the body. Then the body soon dies."

"But, sir," I said, "how can the body know if it is going to be male or female because before the body is born who looks after the formation of the baby."

"Well, that depends on the parents. If you get a growth starting which is alkaline then you get one sex; if you get an acid type of cell then you get the opposite sex, and there are on occasion monsters born. The parents were not really compatible, and what the woman produces is neither male nor female, it may be both, it may even have two heads and perhaps three arms. Well, we know that Buddhists should not take life, but what can be done, how can one let a monster survive? A monster with hardly a rudimentary brain—well, if we let a monster like that grow and propagate their species soon we should have more and more monsters because it seems to us that the bad things multiply more quickly than the good things.

"You will get used to all this when you get to Chungking. I am giving you a rudimentary explanation now so that you know something of what to expect. Now, in a later time I will take you into another room and show you monsters which have been born, and I will show you normal and abnormal cells. And then you will see what a marvelous thing a human body is. But, first of all, examine some of these people especially the women. Here is the book showing what a woman is like outside, and inside. If the person is going to be an attractive woman then her memory cells, that is, the cells which carry the memory to reproduce precisely the body cells just as before, are in good order. Then we have to be sure that the mother has sufficient food of the right type and she has no shocks, etc., etc. And, of course, it usually is not wise to have intercourse when a woman is eight, or so, months pregnant. It may upset the whole balance of things.

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"Now, I have to write up the record to say what we were doing here, how we got in, and I have to make a guess at how we are going to get out!"

"But, Master," I said in some exasperation, "what is the point of writing about this when no one ever comes here?"

"Oh, but people do come here, Lobsang, they do come here. The ignorant call their craft U.F.O.'s. They come here and they stay in rooms above this one. They just come to receive messages and tell of what they have discovered. You see, these people are the Gardeners of the Earth. They have a vast store of knowledge, but somehow through the centuries they have deteriorated. First of all these were absolutely godlike people with almost unlimited power. They could do anything, just about anything at all. But then the 'Head Gardener' sent some of them down to the Earth which had been formed—I have told you all this before—and then the Gardeners travelling at many times the speed of light went back to their base in another Universe.

"As is so often the case on the Earth, and, indeed, on many other worlds, there was a revolution. Some people did not like the thought of these sages, the Gardeners of the Earth, taking women around with them, especially when the woman was some other man's wife. Inevitably there were quarrels, and the Gardeners split into two parties, what I would call the right party and the breakaways. The break-aways thought that, in view of the long distances they traveled and the hard tasks they did, they were entitled to sexual recreation. Well, when they could not get women of their own race to go with them they came to Earth and picked out the biggest women they could find. Events were not at all pleasant because the men were physically too big for the women, and the party that had come to this Earth quarreled and broke up into two parties. One went to live in the East, and the other party went to live in the West, and with their great knowledge they built nuclear weapons on the principle of a neutron explosive and a laser weapon. Then they carried out raids on each other's territory, always with the intention of stealing, perhaps kidnapping would sound better, their opponents' women.

"Raids called for counter-raids, and their great ships sped ceaselessly across the world and back again. And what happened is just a matter of history; the smaller party who were the right ones, in desperation dropped a bomb over where the wrong party were living. Nowadays people relate that area to the 'Bible Lands'.

Everything was destroyed. The desert, which is now there, was once a sparkling sea with many boats upon its surface. But when the bomb dropped the land tipped and all the water ran away down the Mediterranean and out to the Atlantic, and all the water left in the area was the Nile. We can actually see

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all this, Lobsang, because we have machines here which will pick up scenes from the past."

"Scenes from the past, Master? Seeing what happened a million years ago? It doesn't seem possible."

"Lobsang, everything is vibration or, if you like, if you want to sound more scientific, you will say that everything has its own frequency. So if we can find the frequency—and we can—of these events we can actually chase them, we can make our instruments vibrate at a higher frequency and so it will rapidly overtake impulses which were sent off a million years ago. And if then we reduce the frequency of our machines then, if we match our frequency with those originally emitted by the sages of old, we can see exactly what happened. It is too early to tell you about all this, but we travel in the fourth dimension so that we can overtake a thing in the third dimension, and then if we just sit still we can actually watch everything that happened, and we can have a good laugh at some of the things written in history books and compare those works of fiction with what really happened. History books are a crime because history distorts what happened, it leads one into wrong ways. Oh yes, Lobsang, we have the machine here, actually in the next room, and we can see what people called the Flood. We can see what people called Atlantis. But, as I told you, Atlantis was just the term for lands which sank. They sank to a certain extent in the area of Turkey, and a certain continent near Japan sank as well. Come in with me, I am going to show you something." The Lama rose to his feet, and I rose and followed him.

"Of course, we have recorded many of these scenes because it is a lot of hard work actually tuning-in to the incidents themselves. But we have tuned very accurately and we have an absolute record of precisely what did occur. Now," he fiddled with some little reels which were in serried ranks against a wall, and at last he stopped at one and continued, "this will do, now take a look at this." He put the little reel in a machine, and the great model of the Earth—oh, it must have been about twenty-five feet in diameter—seemed to come to life again. To my amazement it spun and moved sideways and then moved back a bit further, and it stopped.

I looked at the scene on this world, and then I 'looked' no longer. I was there. I had every impression that I was there. There was a beautiful land, the grass was the greenest I had ever seen, and I was standing on the edge of a beach of silver sand. People were there lounging, some had highly decorative and highly suggestive swimsuits, and some wore nothing. They, the ones who wore nothing, certainly looked far more decent than those who had a piece of cloth which merely titillated one's sexual interest.

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I looked out across the sparkling sea. The sea was blue, the blue of the sky, and it was a calm day. Little ships with sails were engaged in friendly rivalry, seeing which of them was the fastest, seeing which of them was the best handled. And then—then—all of a sudden, there was a tremendous boom, and the land tipped. Where we were standing the land tipped, and the sea rushed away until before us all we could see was what had been the bottom of the sea.

Scarcely had we drawn breath when a most peculiar sensation affected us. We found that we were rising rapidly up into the air, not just us but the land as well, and the little ridge of rocky hills rose and rose and rose, and it became stupendous mountains, a range of mountains extending as far as the eye could see in any direction.

I seemed to be standing on the very edge of a piece of firm land, and as I cautiously and fearfully peered down I felt sick to my stomach; the land was so high that I thought we must have traveled up to the Heavenly Fields. Not another soul was in sight, I was there alone, frightened, sick at heart. Tibet had risen thirty thousand feet in about thirty seconds. I found that I was panting. The air was rarefied here, and every breath was a gasping effort.

Suddenly, from a split in the mountain range, there sprang a shaft of water under, it seemed, very high pressure. It settled down a bit, and then made its own course down from that high mountain range, right down across the new land which had been the sea bottom. And so was born the mighty Brahmaputra which now has its exit in the Bay of Bengal. But it was not a nice, clean water which reached the Bay of Bengal, it was water polluted with corpses, human, animal, trees, everything. But the water was not the main thing because, to my horrified astonishment, I was rising up, the land was rising up, the mountain was getting higher and higher, and I was going up with it. Soon I was standing in a barren valley ringed with mighty mountains, and we were about thirty thousand feet in the air.

This globe thing, this simulacrum of the world was an absolutely fantastic thing because one was not just looking at the events, one was living the events, actually living them. When I looked at the globe first I thought, "Hmm, some sort of scruffy show like a magic lantern thing, like some of the missionaries bring." But when I looked into the thing I seemed to fall, I seemed to fall out of the clouds, out of the sky, and down, down, down, to come to rest as lightly as a falling leaf. And then I lived the actual events of millions of years before. This was a product of a mighty civilization, far, far, beyond the skill of the present day artisans or scientists. I cannot impress upon you sufficiently that this was living it. I found I could walk. For instance, there was a dark shadow which interested me greatly, and I walked toward it, I felt that I actually WAS walking.

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And then, perhaps for the first time, human eyes looked at the small mountain upon which, in hundreds of centuries to come, the mighty Potala would be built.

"I really cannot understand any of this, Master," I said. "You are trying me beyond the capacity of my brains."

"Nonsense, Lobsang, nonsense. You and I have been together in many, many lives. We have been friends for life after life, and you are going to carry on after me. I have lived four hundred years and more already of this life, and I am the one, the only one in the whole of Tibet, who understands all the workings of these things. That was one of my tasks. And my other task," he looked at me whimsically, "was training you, giving you my knowledge so that when I pass on in the near future with a dagger through my back you will be able to remember this place, remember how to get in, how to use all the appliances, and live again the events of the past. You will be able to see where the world has gone wrong, and I think it is going to be too late in this particular cycle's life to do much about it. But never mind, people are learning the hard way because they reject the easy way. There is no need for all this suffering, you know, Lobsang. There is no need for all this fighting among the Afriti and the British Indian Army, they are always fighting and they seem to think that to fight is the only way to do things. The best way to do a thing is persuasion, not this killing, this raping and murdering and torturing. It hurts the victim, but it hurts the perpetrator more because all this goes back to the Overself. You and I Lobsang, have got a fairly clean record. Our Overself is quite pleased with us."

"You said 'Overself', Master. Does that mean that you and I have the same Overself?"

"Yes indeed it does, young sage, that's just what it does mean. It means that you and I will come together life after life, not merely on this world, not merely in this Universe, but everywhere, anywhere, at any time. You, my poor friend, are going to have a very hard life this time. You are going to be the victim of calumny, there is going to be all manner of lying attacks on you. And yet if people would listen to you Tibet could be saved. Instead of that, in years to come Tibet will be taken over by the Chinese and ruined." He turned away quickly, but not before I saw the tears in his eyes. So I moved away into the kitchen and got a drink of water.

"Master," I said, "I wish you would explain to me how these things do not go bad."

"Well, look at the water you are drinking now. How old is the water? It may be as old as the world itself. It doesn't go bad, does it? Things only go bad

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when they are treated incorrectly. For instance, supposing you cut a finger and it starts to heal, and you cut it again and it starts to heal, and you cut it again and once more it starts to heal, but not necessarily in the same pattern as it was before you cut it. The cells of regeneration have been confused, they started to grow according to their inbuilt pattern, and then they got cut again. They started once more to grow according to their inbuilt pattern, and so on and so on. And eventually the cells forgot the pattern they should form and instead they grew out in a great lump, and that's what cancer is. Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of cells where they should not be, and if one was taught properly and one had full control of the body there wouldn't be any cancer. If one saw that the cells were what I will call misgrowing then the body could stop it in time. We have preached about this, and preached about it in different countries, and people have absolutely hooted with laughter at these natives daring to come from some unknown country, 'gooks' they call us, gooks, the most worthless things in existence. But, you know, we may be gooks, but in time it will be a word of honour, of respect. If people would listen to us we could cure cancer, we could cure T.B. You had T.B., Lobsang, remember that, and I cured you with your cooperation, and if I hadn't had your cooperation I could not have cured you."

We fell silent in a state of spiritual communion with each other. Ours was a purely spiritual association, without any carnal connotation at all. Of course there were some lamas who used their chelas for wrong purposes, lamas who should not have been lamas but who should have been—well, laborers, anything, because they needed women. We did not need women, nor did we need any homosexual association. Ours, as I said, was purely spiritual like the mingling of two souls who mingle to embrace in the spirit and then withdraw from the spirit of the other feeling refreshed and in possession of fresh knowledge.

There is such a feeling in the world today that sex is the only thing that matters, selfish sex, not for the continuation of the race but just because it gives pleasant sensations. The real sex is that which we have when we leave this world, the communion of two souls, and when we return back to the Overself we shall experience the greatest thrill, the greatest exhilaration of all. And then we shall realize that the hardships we endured on this beastly Earth were merely to drive out impurities from us, to drive out wrong thoughts from us, and in my opinion, the world is too hard. It is so hard, and humans have degenerated so much that they cannot take the hardship, they cannot profit by the hardship, but instead they become worse and worse, and more and more evil, venting their spite on little animals. That is a great pity because cats, for example, are known as the eyes of the Gods. Cats can go anywhere, nobody takes any notice when a cat is sitting there, forelegs folded and tail curled neatly around the body, and eyes half shut—people think the cat is resting. But no,

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the cat is working, the cat is transmitting all that is happening. Your brain cannot see anything without your eyes. Your brain cannot make a sound without your voice, and cats are another extension of the senses which let the Gardeners of the Earth know what is going on. In time we shall welcome this, in time we shall realize that cats have saved us from many a fatal mistake. It is a pity we don't treat them more kindly, isn't it?

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CHAPTER SEVEN

"Lobsang! LOBSANG! Come on, we have some work to do."

I jumped up in such a hurry that I kicked away my shoes, well, sandals; there was no such thing as shoes in Tibet. Everyone wore sandals or, if one was riding a long way, boots which came up to the knees. Anyway, there were my sandals skittering across the floor, and I was skittering across the floor in the opposite direction. I reached the Lama and he said, "Now, we've got to do a bit of history, true history, not the muck they put out in books where things have to be altered so they shall not annoy any man in a powerful position."

He led me into what we had come to call the 'World Room', and we sat down at the little corner which we called the "console".

It really was a marvelous thing; this simulacrum of the world looked larger than the room which contained it, which everyone would know is impossible. But the Lama divined my thoughts, and he said, "Of course, when we come in here we come under the influence of the fourth dimension, and in the fourth dimension one can have a model which is larger than the room that contains it if that room be of the three dimensions. But let's not worry about that, let's worry about this. What we are seeing in this world is the actual happenings of the world in years gone by, some- thing like an echo. You go and make a loud noise in an echo area, and you get the same sound come back to you. Well, that is a very brief idea of what this is, it's not strictly accurate, of course, because I am trying to tell you in the three dimensions what there is in the fourth and fifth. So you will have to trust your senses as to what you see, and what you see will actually be quite correct." He turned around again, and then said,

"We have seen the formation of the world, we have seen the very first creatures—hominids—to be placed on this world, so let us start this at the next stage."

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The room darkened and I felt myself falling. Instinctively I grabbed the Lama's arm, and he put an arm around my shoulders. "It's all right, Lobsang, you are not really falling, its just that your brain is changing to accept four dimensions."

Now the falling sensation stopped, and I found my- self standing in a shockingly frightening world. There were huge animals there of an ugliness unsurpassed by anything I had seen before. Great creatures went by, flapping through the air with the most hideous sound, it sounded like old unoiled leather. Wings which could barely support the body of the creature. But these flew around and occasionally one went down to the ground to pick up a piece of food which had fallen from some other flying creature. But once down, they stayed down, their wings were insufficient to get them in the air again, and they had no legs with which to help themselves.

Indescribable noises came from the marsh to my left, they were shocking noises, and I felt sick with fright. And then, quite close to me, out of the muck of the marsh, there emerged a tiny head on top of a vast neck. The neck must have been about twenty feet long, and there were many underwater struggles before the thing dragged itself ashore. It had a round body, and then a tail which tapered to balance the contours of the neck and the head.

But as I was looking at that thing, and afraid that it might be looking at me, I heard horrid crashes and cracks as if some vast thing was charging through the forest and snapping off tree trunks like we would snap a straw. I caught a glimpse of the largest creature I had ever seen.

The Lama said, "Let's go on a century or two and find when the humans first came."

I seemed to doze or something because when I looked at the globe again—no, no—of course not, I was ON the globe, I was IN the globe, part of it. But, anyway, when I looked up again I saw some horrid looking creatures marching along, there were six of them, and they were beetle-browed with hardly any neck, and they each carried a great chunk of tree as a weapon, tapering to a handgrip at one end and the other end having a nice knot or burl which would be stronger than the ordinary wood of which the trunk was composed. These creatures marched along, One, a woman, was feeding a baby at her breast as she marched, and they made not a sound although they were going along marshy ground, there was no squelching or splashing, just complete silence. I watched them go out of sight, and then, once again, I seemed to have a doze because when I looked up again I saw a marvelous city. The city was made of shining stones of different colours, there were bridges across the streets, and there were mechanical birds which flew along the streets with people in them.

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These things could stop and hover in the air while people got in or got out. Then, all of a sudden, everyone turned and gazed toward the distant skyline, over the mountain range. From there there came a vast roaring, and soon a whole flock of these mechanical birds came along and they circled over the city. People were running everywhere. Some were on their knees praying, but the priests, I noted, did not stop to pray, they put all their energy into running. After some minutes of this circling doors opened in the bottom of these mechanical things, and metal boxes fell out. The mechanical birds closed the doors in their undersides, and they sped off. The city rose up into the air, and fell to the ground as dust, and then we heard the bang and the concussion because sight is so much quicker than hearing. We heard the screams of the people, people trapped beneath beams or buried in dust. Again, there came a doze, this is all I can call it—a doze—because I was unaware of any break between what I had been seeing and what I was seeing now. It was a later age, and I could see a city being built, a grand city, one of surpassing beauty. It was real artistry. Spires soared high into the sky, and there were delicate traceries of metal joining one building to another. There were people about, people going about their everyday business, shopping, selling, standing on street corners and discussing things. Then there came a roaring, a terrific roaring, and an immense flock of these mechanical birds passed overhead in formation, and all the people laughed, cheered and waved. The mechanical birds proceeded upon their way undisturbed. They crossed the mountain range; and then we heard terrible bangs and crashes, and we knew that 'our side' were paying back the enemy for the destruction that they had caused.

But—but mechanical birds were returning, or not returning, because they were not ours, they were different, some were of different shapes, many were of different colours, and they came over our city and they dropped their bombs again. Our city was swept by a fire storm, the fire roared and raged, and everything in the city burned and fell to the ground. Delicate traceries of bridges turned red and then white, and then they melted, and the liquid metal fell like rain. Soon I was standing on a plain, the only thing there. There were no trees, the artificial lakes had gone, turned into steam, and I stood there and I looked about me, and I wondered what was the sense of it all, why were these Gardeners of the Earth fighting against other Gardeners? I could not make any sense at all out of it.

Then the world itself shook and darkened. I found myself sitting on a chair beside the Lama Mingyar Dondup. He was looking sadder than I had ever seen anyone look before. "Lobsang, this has happened on this world for millions of years. There have been people of a high degree of culture, but somehow they have shelled the other side so that only a few humans were left, and

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they hid in caves and in a few years they crept out to start again with a fresh civilization. And that civilization in its turn would be destroyed, and all the remnants would be ploughed deep into the soil by the farmers who were trying to grow crops in the battle-torn land."

The Lama looked exceedingly sad, and he sat with his chin cupped in his hands. And then he said, "I could show you the whole history of the world, but it would take the whole of your lifetime to view it. So I will only show you some flashes, as we call it, and I will tell you about others. It is a very sad thing but various types of people have been tried as settlers on this world. There has been an all-black race, it came after a big turmoil. Two white races had been quarrelling as to who was the most powerful, and, of course, they resorted to warfare. It's always warfare, always the evil thoughts of people. If people would only believe in a God there would be none of this trouble. But this all-black race made a horrible mess of things on the world until at last they reached a very high degree of civilization, far higher than our civilization now. But then two different races of the black people quarreled and they sought frantically to get a more powerful weapon than their opponents. Well, they did, and somehow the signal was given to release these—well—rocket things, and that caused tremendous trouble on this world. Most of the people were wiped out, just wiped out like one would kill off a colony of fierce ants.

"Always there are some survivors, and so now we have a white race, a black race, and a yellow race. At one time there was a green race. People in those days lived for hundred of years because their 'memory cells' were able to reproduce dying cells with exactitude. It is only since the cells lost their ability to reproduce accurately that we have such short lives. But in one of the wars there were tremendous explosions, and most of the cloud cover of the Earth was blown away, blown away into space, and the sunlight came pouring in with all the lethal rays. And instead of people living seven or eight hundred years their life-span was just about seventy years.

"The sun isn't the kind, benevolent provider of sunlight, etc., etc. It sends out rays which cause harm to people. You can see for yourself that people exposed to the sunlight too much have their skin turn dark. Now if it was good to have sunlight then Nature would not need to make a shield against the light. But the rays, ultraviolet, and others, affected the humans and made them worse, and the two sets of Gardeners of the Earth became even fiercer. One side was good and wanted to see the human race grow fruitful and do much good; instead of that, people exposed to too much sunlight used to get T.B. or cancer. All the surfaces of the world, or rather, all the surfaces of the people of the world, were prone to diseases, skin diseases of various forms, and they were tenacious, there was no cure for them. After all, these rays could penetrate

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many feet of stone, and it was useless for the inhabitants of the world to live in houses because the rays could still reach them.

"There is an old saying that there were giants in those days. Yes, that is true. The giants were one set of the Gardeners of the Earth. They stood two or three times the height of the average human, and they were slow moving, somewhat lethargic, and did not like to work. They tried to get back to their home base, but when they tried they found that there had been troubles on the home base. One set of Gardeners were good and with a good leader, but the other side was a bad side. They threw on wickedness of all kinds, and they were immune to the appeals of those who wanted a peaceful world with a more healthy life-span.

"These good Gardeners saw how useless it was to stay at their home base, so they reprovisioned their ships and put in fresh fuel rods, and they took off again for Earth.

"Their ships could travel faster than light. They could travel so fast that no human could control them, and they had to be worked by a form of computer which had a special shield to keep away meteorites, or other obstructions, otherwise without these shields the ships would have been riddled with meteorites or cosmic dust resulting, of course, in loss of air and the death of all aboard.

"At last they got back to the Earth and they found another war in progress. The wrong side—the bad part of the Gardeners of the Earth—had mixed too freely with the Earth people, and taught them many of their secrets. Since those days the world has been getting worse and worse, and there will have to be a fresh world war during which many people will die. Many more will go into hiding in caves or in high mountain clefts. They were told by their Sages of all that was going to happen, so they took the view that what was the good of living a good life when, in a few short years, perhaps the Earth itself would be destroyed. And we are getting perilously close to that time now."

I listened to all this, and then I said, "I have been told by the head astrologer that I am going to have an awful life, a really sick life. Now, how is that going to help the world?"

The Lama said, "Yes, everything the head astrologer said has come to pass, and it is true that you are going to have a very, very bad time with everyone's hand against you. But always remember that you will succeed in what you are doing, and when you leave this world you will not be stuck in the astral, you will go to a much higher station. And, of course, you will never return to the Earth. I am not sure if it's time yet to tell you of all the things that are

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going to happen here, but let us have a look at some of the events of the past. I think, though, that first we should have a meal because these three dimension pictorial realizations tire one and one forgets the time."

We were true to our native food, tsampa, and cold water to drink. But then the Lama said, "You will have to get used to different food because in other parts of the world they do not know anything at all about tsampa, they have food which is precooked, sealed in a can, and as long as the can is kept intact the food is edible no matter how long it is kept before eating. But, of course, one also has to keep the cans at a cold temperature, that stops the decay. Nowadays in the West they use what they call ice boxes, great big boxes packed with ice which surrounds the cans of food, and every few days the boxes have to be opened to see how much of the ice has melted. If a lot has melted then the whole box has to be repacked with fresh ice. You can always tell, though, when the food has gone bad because the cans will bulge showing that there is a gas pressure, the gas of decomposition inside. And then one has to throw away such cans or get poisoned.

"Now let us clean our bowls, and then we will look once again at this world of which we are part." The Lama rose to his feet and scraped away the remnants of tsampa, and then he went to a little pile of sand, took a handful, and cleaned his bowl with it. I followed suit, and I thought what an awful chore it was having to clean dishes every time. I wondered why no one had invented something to hold food and then be discarded when the food upon it had been eaten. I thought of all the monks and all the lamas busy with their handful of fine sand, but that is a lot more healthy than washing a wooden bowl, you know. If you have a thing wet then, obviously, it is going to seep into the wood. And suppose you have some nice juicy fruit in your bowl; you eat the fruit and there is some juice left, and if you go and wash that bowl then you are saturating the wood and allowing juices to enter. No, until there is a better system very fine sand is much, much better than water."

"How long do you think this world has been a world, sir?"

The lama smiled at me and said, "Well, you have already seen part of it, and I think we ought to see a bit more of the world, past, present and future, don't you?"

We walked slowly towards that great hall or room where the simulacrum of the world lay waiting to be used. "You know, Lobsang, we all tend to think that this world is for ever and for ever, and yet this Universe is actually being destroyed now. It has been established quite definitely that all the worlds are rushing away from each other. Now, really the best way to explain it is to tell you again that the time on this world is entirely artificial. The real time is space

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time, and do you remember those fusees which I showed you and which could be struck on something rough and the end would explode into flame? Well, if you are a God in space the birth, life and death of this world or any other world would resemble the striking of that fusee. First there is the heat engendered by the friction of the fusee point on something hard. Then the point bursts into flame, and then the flame dies out and you've got just a red hot head to the fusee which quickly cools to become just a black burned mass. Earth is like that, and all the other planets. To us living on this Earth the Earth seems forever, but supposing you had a minute, minute person who could be placed on the head of the fusee as it was cooling, he would think that he was living on a world which would exist for ever and for ever. Do you get what I am driving at?"

"Yes, sir, I do. I was told by a lama who had been to a big school in Germany, and he said that a fusee simile is appropriate. He used almost the same words as you, but he added that after several million years the head of the match, or the world, would reach about twenty million degrees Fahrenheit because it needs a certain temperature before the hydrogen in the atmosphere can be converted to carbon, oxygen and various other elements. All these elements are necessary in the formation of the world. He told me, also, that before the end of the world the world globe swells."

"Yes, that is absolutely true. You have to remember that in the Western world they do not know of these things because they haven't anything like we have here. Here we actually have the instruments which super-scientists of perhaps a billion years ago built—built to last a billion years or more. These machines have stood here throughout the hundreds, throughout the thousands of centuries, until someone came along who knew how to work them. I know how to work them, Lobsang, and I am going to teach you, and you are going to have a life of hardship so that you know what the world is really like. And because of the teaching which you can take back to Patra you can make it easier for other worlds."

"But, sir, you have mentioned the word 'Patra', but I know of no world with that name," I said.

"No, I am aware of that, but you will do before long. I am going to show you Patra in this world, but there are so many things to see first, and I have always found it to be useless to have an instrument which would produce predictable results, but then, if the operator did not know how to work the machine and how the final result was arrived at, then he would be a very poor operator indeed. No instrument should be used unless the prospective operator can do the things which the instrument has been designed to do."

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We reached the room, it should be called a hall, really, because of the size of it, but we reached the room or hall, or whatever you want to call it, and we entered. Immediately there was a faint glow and we saw dawn beginning to turn to daylight. It was a different sort of dawn than we should see now because now all those glorious colours which we see at sunrise and sunset are merely reflections from the pollution in the atmosphere. In those days the 'pollution' was actually food for the Earth, food for the soil being screwed out onto the land from the volcanoes, and it is these volcanoes which gave the seas their salt content. Without salt one could not live.

We sat down by that console thing, and the Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Let us look at some random spots. We've got all the time we need, they will probably be glad to get us out of their way, especially you, you young wretch, dropping things on peoples' bald heads. But in the early days animals, the first form of life on Earth, were weird creatures indeed. For instance, the brachiosaurus was probably the strangest creature that has ever been seen on this Earth. There are all manner of strange things. For example, ultrasaurus was a most peculiar animal. It would have a very high blood pressure because its head could be more than sixty feet in the air, and furthermore that animal weighed about eighty tons, and it had two brains, the one in the head moved the jaws and the front legs, and the one at its behind, that is, right behind the pelvis, is there to work the tail and rear legs. It always reminds me of a question I was asked, 'What happens if a centipede gets its legs out of step?' Well, that is a question I could not answer with any degree of accuracy. I could only say that perhaps the creature had some special other creature watching over it to see that it didn't go cross-legged."

"Well, Lobsang, what shall we look at? We have ample time and so you tell me what you want to see most."

I thought for a time, and then I said, "That Japanese lama we had, he told us a lot of peculiar things, I still don't know whether to believe him or not. He told us that the world was once very hot, and then all of a sudden it became very cold and the surface of the world was covered with ice. Can we see that?"

"Yes, of course we can. There is no difficulty at all. But, you know, this has happened several times. You see, the world is billions of years old and every so many millions of years there is an ice age. For instance, at the North Pole now there is a depth of ice in the water of six hundred feet, and if all the ice melted and the icebergs also melted everyone on Earth would be drowned because the land would be inundated—well, except for we of Tibet, and we would be too high for the water to reach." He turned to the console and looked up a whole column of figures, and then the light in the big hall, or room, or

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whatever you want to call it, dimmed. For seconds we were in darkness and then there came a reddish glow, most peculiar, absolutely peculiar, and from the poles, the North and the South Poles, there came variegated streaks of light.

"That is the aurora borealis, or aura of the world. We can see it because, although we appear to be on Earth, we are away from that manifestation, that is why we see it." The light grew brighter, it grew dazzlingly bright, so bright that we had to view it through almost closed eyes.

"Where is Tibet?" I asked.

"We are standing on it, Lobsang, we are standing on it. All that that you are looking at down there is ice."

I was looking at that ice wondering what it could be because—well, there was green ice, there was blue ice, and there was absolutely transparent ice, as transparent as the clearest of clear water. I just could not make it out, so I said, "I've seen enough of that, that is a dismal sight." The Lama laughed and turned back to the things on the console, and the world turned and flickered with speed. Then it was turning so fast that everything was grey, there was no darkness and no lightness, only this grey impression, and then the world slowed down and we found that we were looking at a great city, a fantastic city. It was a city built just before the advent of the Sumerians. It was built by a race of whose existence there is now no written trace, nothing in history about it and, in fact, there was only the remotest mention of Sumerians in the history books.

But they came as conquerors and they looted, raped, and ravished the city, and having reduced it to a state when no stone stood upon another stone they moved on and—according to the history books—they moved out somewhere and no trace has ever been found. No, of course not, because they moved away and they moved off the Earth in huge space ships. I could not understand why these people should be so savage as to come and just destroy a city—well, apparently for the fun of it. Of course they took a lot of women prisoners and that might have been some of the reason.

It occurred to me that I was looking at something which could change the whole history of mankind.

"Master," I said, "I have been looking at all these things, looking at all these wonderful, wonderful inventions, but it seems that only a very few people know about them. Now, surely, if everyone knew about them we could have a time when there would be peace throughout the world because what would there be to fight about if everything could be known through these instruments or machines?"

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"No, Lobsang, it is not so, old man, it's not so. If there was any thought that people would know about this then crooked financiers would rush in with their armed guards and they would seize all this and kill all of us who know about it, and then they would use the instruments to control the world. Think of it. A crooked capitalist being the king of the world, and everyone else would be his slave."

"Well, I can't understand the attitude of people because we know Tibet is going to be invaded by the Chinese, we know they are going to take all our treasured books away to study. What's to prevent them from capturing the world?"

"Lobsang, my dear friend, you must be very, very simple, weak in the head or something. You don't think we would let any conqueror get hold of things like this, do you? To start with, we have absolute duplicates of these right up in the high Arctic where men can hardly manage to move because of the cold. But inside the mountain ranges there everything is warm and peaceful and comfortable, and we would have eyes on the world, we could see just what was happening, and if necessary we could take some action. But this stuff here—" he gestured around, "all this will be wrecked, blown up, and even booby trapped. First the British and the Russians will try to capture Tibet, but they will fail, they will cause a terrible amount of deaths, but they will fail to conquer. But they will give the Chinese the idea of how to succeed, and the Chinese will come and they will conquer Tibet, conquer part of it, that is. But still they will not get any of these machines, they will not get any of the Holy books or the medical books because we have known of this for years, for centuries, actually, and false books have been prepared and they are ready to be put in place as soon as the Chinese start to invade. The Prophecy, you know, says that Tibet will survive until wheels come to our country, and when wheels come to Tibet that will be the end of our country. So have no fear, all our treasures, all our great sciences from a few million years ago, are safely hidden. I know the location, I have been there. And you, too, are going to know the location because you are going to be shown. I shall be killed in your lifetime, in fact before you leave Tibet, and you will be one of the very, very few who can work these machines and who know how to service them."

"Good gracious, sir, to learn to service these machines would take several lifetimes."

"No, you will learn that they are self repairing. You have to do just a few manipulations and the machine, or rather, other machines, will repair the faulty machine. You see, they won't have much longer to live, these machines, because starting in several years time, 1985, circumstances will change and there

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will be a third World War which will last for quite a time, and after the year 2000 there will be many, many changes, some for the better, some for the worse. We are able to see through the Akashic Record of Probabilities. Now, Man is not on rails, you know, unable to deviate from a certain path.. Man has free choice within certain limits, those limits being set by the astrological type of the person. But we can very accurately see what happens to a country, and that is what we shall soon be doing because I want you to see some of the wonders of the world. We will tune-in to different situations, to different times.”

“But, sir, how is it possible for you to tune-in to sounds which have long passed by, sounds, pictures, and all that? When a thing has happened it is done and finished with.”

“Not so, Lobsang, not so. Matter is indestructible, and the impressions of what we say or do go out from us and circle the Universe, and circle the Universe again and again. With this big machine we can go back to about two billion years. Mind, at two billion years the picture is a bit hazy but still bright enough for us to make out what it is.”

“Well, I can’t understand,” I said, “how one can pick up pictures and sounds out of nothingness.”

“Lobsang, in a few years to come there will be some- thing called wireless. It is being invented now, and with it one can pick up what will be called radio programs, and if the receiver is good enough you can pick up from any transmitter in the world, and later still they will have these radio boxes which can pick up pictures. It has all been done before, but as civilizations succeed civilization sometimes the same things are reinvented. Sometimes an improved version results, but in this case, apparently, the thing called wireless is giving a lot of trouble because the information has to be brought from the astral world by scientists who think they invented it. But, anyway, you just take my word for it that we can go on and see what is going to happen in the world. Unfortunately our upper limit will be three thousand years, beyond that—no—we cannot reach, our pictures are too hazy, too muzzy, for us to decipher them. But you are going to have a lot of suffering and a lot of travelling, and you are going to be the victim of various unscrupulous people who will not like what you are doing and so they will try to blacken your character. On this machine within the next few days you are going to see quite a lot of the highlights of your career. But let us just look at some odds by tuning-in to things at random. Now, look, here is the important happenings in a place called Egypt.” The Lama adjusted various controls, and we saw darkness, and up on the skyline of the darkness there were some black triangles. It didn’t make sense to me at all, so he gradually advanced one control and the world gradually came into day-

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light. He said, "Look, this is the building of the Pyramids. People will wonder and wonder in later years however these great blocks of stone were moved around without all sorts of machinery. They are moved by levitation."

"Yes, sir," I replied, "I have heard a lot about levitation, but I haven't the faintest idea how it works."

"Well, you see, the world has a magnetic pull. If you throw a thing up into the air the magnetism of the Earth pulls it down again. If you fall out of a tree you fall down, not up, because the magnetism of the Earth is such that you must fall to the Earth. But we have a thing which is antimagnetic to the Earth, we have to keep them very carefully under guard the whole time because if an untrained person got hold of one of these things he could find that he had floated right out of the Earth. The fall then is upwards. How we control it is by having two grids, one is tuned to the magnetism of the Earth, the other is opposed to the magnetism of the Earth. Now, when the grids are in a certain position the plates will float, they will not go up and they will not go down. But if you push a lever which alters the relationship of the grids to each other, then in one direction the lever makes the Earth magnetism the stronger, and so the plates, or machine, sink down to the Earth. But if we want to rise up then we push the lever the other way so that the anti-magnetism takes effect and the Earth repels instead of attracts, and so we can rise up into the air. It is the thing the Gods used when they were making this world as it is now. One man could lift up these hundred ton blocks and put them in position without exerting himself, and then, when the block was in the precise position desired, the magnetic current would be switched off and the block would be locked in position by the pull of gravity of the Earth. That is how the Pyramids were built, that is how many strange things, unaccountable things, were built. For example, we have had maps of the Earth for centuries, and we are the only people who have these maps because we alone have these anti-gravity devices and they have been used to map the world exactly. But this is no time to be discussing things. I think we should have a meal, and then we will look at my legs, and after that let us go to sleep for there is a brand new day tomorrow, a day you have never seen before."

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CHAPTER EIGHT

"Lobsang! Come on, it's lesson time." My mind went back to another lesson time. It was at the Potala. I had been away a few days with the Lama Mingyar Dondup, and then when we returned to the Potala he said, "Well, lessons will just have started for this afternoon, you'd better go in to the class now." I nodded somewhat despondently and walked in to the classroom. The Lama Teacher looked up and then an expression of rage came to his face, he pointed his finger at me and shouted, "Out! Out! I won't have you in my class."

So there was nothing else for it, I turned around and walked out. Some of the other chelas tittered a bit, and the Lama Teacher descended upon them with his cane flailing everywhere.

I went out into what we called our playground and idly scuffed at the earth. The Lama Mingyar Dondup turned a corner and saw me, and he came across to me and said, "I thought you had gone to class."

"I did, sir," I replied, "but the Teacher was in a rage with me and he ordered me out and said that there would be no more room in his classes for me."

"Oh did he?" said my Guide. "Come along, we will go and see what it's all about together."

We walked side by side along the corridor. The corridor floor was quite slippery with melted butter which had dripped from our butter oil lamps, and the melted butter had fallen to the floor and hardened with the cold and the wretched place was sometimes like a skating rink. But we walked along together to the class- room, and we entered. The Lama Teacher was in a furious rage, lashing out at boys at random. When he saw the Lama Mingyar Dondup he turned very pale indeed, it gave him a nasty shock, and he went back to his podium.

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"What is the trouble here?" asked the Lama Mingyar Dondup.

"There is no trouble here except that boy" (pointing at me) "always disturbs the class. We don't know if he is going to be in the class or out of the class, and I am not having a boy like that to teach."

"Oh, so it's like that, eh? This boy, Lobsang Rampa, is under special orders from the Great Thirteenth, and you will obey those orders just as I do. Come with me, we will go and see the Great Thirteenth now." The Lama Mingyar Dondup turned and walked out of the room with the Lama Teacher following him meekly, still clutching his stick.

"My!" said a boy, "I wonder what's going to happen now, I thought he was going mad. He lashed out at all of us and you can see we've got bruised marks on our faces. I wonder what's going to happen now."

He hadn't long to wait because quite soon the Lama Mingyar Dondup appeared and in his wake there followed a fairly young, studious-looking Lama. The Lama Mingyar Dondup solemnly introduced him to us, and said, "He will be your Teacher from now on, and I want to see a great improvement in behavior and in the work you do." He turned to the new Teacher and said, "Lobsang Rampa is under special orders. Sometimes he will be away from this class for days. You will do your best to help him catch up on those missing days."

The two Lamas gravely bowed to each other, and Mingyar Dondup then left. I could not understand why that memory had come up all of a sudden, but—"Hey, Lobsang, you haven't heard a word I have said, have you?"

"No, sir, I was thinking of that time when I could not be accepted into a class, and I was just wondering how such a Lama could become a Teacher as well."

"Oh well, you get good people and you get bad people, and I suppose this time we got a bad one. But never mind, everything is settled. We could say now that I am your Keeper. I don't know if I have to have a lead or a collar for you, or what, but I am your Keeper, and I say what happens to you and no other Teacher can say." He smiled at me as I broke into a really broad smile. I could learn with Mingyar Dondup. He did not stop at the regulation stuff, but he went on to tell us things about the great outer world which he had travelled so much.

"Well, Lobsang, we'd better start at a fairly elementary stage because you will have to teach people in the great outer world, and although you probably know all the first part which I am going to tell you, yet repetition won't hurt you a bit. It might even drive the knowledge in another inch or two." The way he said it was a compliment, and I resolved anew to be a credit to him.

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Whether I have succeeded or failed only time will tell, when we get back to Patra.

"We will imagine a living body. The person lies down and goes to sleep, and then his astral form will come out of that body and will travel to some place and if the sleeper is fairly unevolved he will wake up thinking he has had a dream and nothing more. But when we get a trained person that person can apparently be soundly asleep while all the time he is doing controlled astral travel and is still aware of what is happening near his physical body. He will get out of the physical body and travel to wherever he wants to, wherever he has been directed to go. You can travel to anywhere on the world by astral travel, and if you train yourself you can remember every single thing that happened when you return to your flesh body.

"When a person dies it is because the astral person wants to get rid of the flesh body. Perhaps the flesh body is disabled and will not function properly, or perhaps the flesh body has learned everything that he needed to learn in that particular incarnation because people come back to Earth time after time until their lessons are learned. You and I are different because we are from beyond the astral, we are from Patra with which we will deal with a little later.

"When the astral form is completely free from the physical body and the Silver Cord is severed and the Golden Bowl be shattered then the entity who was in that body is free to move about, free to do more or less as he wants to do. And then after a time he gets tired of us—well—running wild, and he consults a special branch of the Government whose sole task it is to advise astral people as to what would be best for them, should they stay in the astral and learn a bit more there, or should they go back to the Earth in different circumstances so that they can learn the hard way. You see, when people are in the Overself stage—oh, that is a long way from you just yet, Lobsang—then they cannot experience pain, and people learn more quickly by pain than they do by kindness. So perhaps it will be mapped out that this person shall go back to Earth with an urge to murder, he will be born to parents who are most likely to give him the opportunity of murdering someone. Now, his task is to fight against his inbuilt desire to murder, and if he gets through life without killing another person then that life will have been a complete success. He is learning to control him-self, and in that case he will be able to have a rest in the astral, and then, once again, he will approach the Committee of Advisers to see what next they need him to do. He may be given an inclination to be a great missionary, teaching the wrong things. Well, again, he is born to parents who can give him the opportunity of being a missionary, and then it all depends upon how satisfactory he is in that work, and if he realizes that he is teaching the wrong things

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then he might make a change and gather much benefit from it. He might, for instance, realize that there can't be a virgin birth unless the offspring be female. Under certain circumstances women can produce children without the no doubt pleasurable aid of a man, but on every occasion the child so born will be female. If she grows up and marries and has a child then the child may be female or may be a weak, sickly male. You never get a dominant person born without the aid of a man.

"In the astral people can see their mistakes and perhaps do something to overcome the bad they have done to other people. Did you know, Lobsang, that every person on Earth has had to live through the whole of the Zodiac and all the quadrants of the Zodiac as well because the astrological makeup of a person has a very great bearing on how he progresses and his station in life. For example, an Aries person might come and be a very successful butcher, but if his parents are of high enough status he might become a very successful surgeon, not much difference between them, you know. I am told that a pig and a human taste much the same, not that I have ever tried it or intend to try it."

I thought of this for a moment or two, and then I said, "Master, does this mean that we have to live through each sign of the Zodiac—Mars, Venus, and all the others—and then live through the same astrological Sun sign with all the different quadrants?"

"Well, yes, of course it does. The difference that is made by each quadrant is almost unbelievable, because if we get a strong Sun sign then the first part of the quadrant will contain not only the Sun sign but also strong indications from the sign before. Whereas in the centre of the quadrants the Sun sign will be the pre-dominant influence and then, as one progresses through that sign, as we come to the last part of the quadrant then the indications are very strong for the next sign on the chart. I am telling you all this because you may have to explain things like it to people in the future. So every person lives through every part of the Zodiac, not necessarily in the same order but in that order which enables them to profit the most from the things that have to be learned."

"I keep being reminded, Master, that I am going to have a quite hard life with much suffering, etc., etc. Well, why does there have to be so much suffering?"

The Lama Mingyar Dondup looked down at his feet for a moment or two, and then he said, "You have a very great task to do, a noble task, and you will find that people who are not themselves noble will try to prevent you from having any success, and they will stoop to any sort of trick to prevent you from

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achieving success. You see, people get jealous, people make something, write something, or draw something which is acknowledged to be far better than a book or drawing which was the undisputed leader before your effort.

Now, I know I sound all mixed up on that, but that's just how it is. You will have to count on a terrific amount of jealousy and—you poor soul—you will have a lot of trouble caused by women, not through your sexual activities with them, but someone's wife will show friendship to you and her husband, not understanding, will be insanely jealous. And then other women will be jealous because they smiled at you and you didn't smile back at them. Oh, Lobsang, beware of women, I have all my life and I feel the better for it."

I sat in black gloomy silence thinking over my terrible fate, and then the Lama said, "Cheer up, I know that you know nothing at all about women, but soon you will have an opportunity to examine their bodies inside and outside because when you leave here to go to Chungking in a few years you will see dead bodies, male and female, in the dissecting rooms. At first you will find that your stomach will heave quite a bit, but no matter, a day or two and you will be quite used to it, and from the Record of Probabilities you are going to be a very good doctor indeed. You can be a good surgeon because—well, I must say—you are a bit ruthless and one has to be ruthless to be a good surgeon. So when we get out of this cell, or cage, or cave, call it what you will, you will soon go to another where you will have a bit of practice with surgical instruments and where you can learn things through the universal language. And, of course, I stand ready to help you in any way possible."

"Master, you have mentioned Patra several times within the last few days, but I have never heard of the word before and I am sure that not too many people in the Potala or Chakpori make much use of the word."

"Well, there is no point in mentioning a thing which is far, far beyond the average person's attainment. Patra is the Heavenly Fields of the Heavenly Fields. All people, when they leave the Earth, go to the astral world. It actually is a world, as you should have seen through your astral travels. It is a world just like this Earth in many ways, but there are many more pleasant facets to it, you can mix with people, you can read, you can talk, and you can go to meetings and hear how others are getting on. Why did this person fail, and why did that person succeed. But from the astral people return to Earth or to some other planet in order to carry out another and more successful life. But there is a rare, rare planet called Patra. It is the Heaven of Heavens, only the very best souls go there, only those who have done most good. For example, Leonardo da Vinci is there working on projects which will help other 'earths'. Socrates is there. Aristotle and many of that type are there. You won't find any fakes there,

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that excludes one quite definitely, and it is already planned that you are going to Patra at the end of this life. You are going there because, for several lives, you have had hardship after hardship, and you have successfully sur-mounted them, and the task you are doing now—well, anyone else would say it was an impossible task, but you will succeed and you will stay on Patra for quite a time. There is no friction there, no fights, no starvation or cruelty.”

“Will eats be permitted on Patra, Master?”

“Oh my goodness, yes, of course they will. Cats have souls just the same as people. There are a lot of ignoramuses who think that this thing on four legs is just a dumb animal, almost without feeling and certainly without intelligence, and definitely without a soul. That is not true. Cats have souls, cats can progress. They can progress through the world of the Astral and read about Patra. In Patra they can be with the people they loved on Earth, or perhaps on some other planet. Oh yes, Lobsang, you must make it quite clear to people that cats are people, they are individuals, they are highly evolved little people who have been put on Earth for a special purpose. So you should treat cats with great respect, as I know you do.

“Let’s take a walk around because my legs are getting stiff, and I think I am ready for a bit of a walk to try and loosen them up. So come on, stir those lazy legs of yours, and we will walk around and see some other things that you haven’t seen before.”

“Master!” I called out to the Lama Mingyar Dondup who was quite a way ahead of me now. He stopped to permit me to catch up with him, and then I went on,

“Master, you know this place well, you know it very well, and I thought it was a discovery. You’ve been teasing me, Master.”

He laughed and said, “No, I haven’t been teasing you, Lobsang, and the particular entrance we came in—well that was a surprise. I certainly did not expect an entrance there because there is nothing about it on the maps, and I am rather wondering why there should have been an entrance there. You agree with me that there was no sign of a rock deformation. I suppose it must have been because that old hermit was in charge of various supplies here and he liked to have this entrance so close to his hermitage. But—no, no, I wasn’t teasing you. We shall have to find out how to get out tomorrow because now my legs have healed so well I can manage to climb down the mountain.”

I replied, “Well, you won’t look very pretty climbing down the mountain with your robes in such tatters.”

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"Ah yes I will. You and I are going to appear tomorrow in brand new robes which are about a million years old!" Then, as an afterthought, "And you are going to appear as a monk, not as a chela or acolyte. From now on you have to stay with me and go where I go, and learn anything that I can tell you." He turned away, walked just a few steps, bowed to a door, and placed his hands in a certain position. Slowly I saw a section of the wall slide aside in utter silence, no grating of rock upon rock, utter silence, such silence as to make the whole thing uncanny.

The Lama gave me a little push between the shoulder blades, and said, "Come on, this is some stuff you have to see. This is Patra. This is how Patra would appear to us. Of course this globe," and he gestured to a great globe which absolutely filled a large hall, "is merely so that we can see what is going on in Patra at any time." He put his hand on my shoulder, and we walked a few yards until we came to a wall fitted with instruments and a great big screen—oh, about four men high and three men wide. He said, "That is for any particular detail investigation."

The lights in the hall dimmed. Similarly, at the same rate, the light from the globe which he had called Patra brightened. It was a sort of well—pinkish—gold colour, and it gave one a wonderful feeling of warmness and the sensation that one was truly welcome.

The Lama pushed one of those button things again and the haziness in the globe, or around the globe, disappeared like a mountain fog disappearing before the rays of the sun. I peered avidly. This was a wonderful world indeed. I seemed to be standing on a stone wall, and waves were beating mildly against the wall.

Then, just to my right, I saw a ship coming in. I knew it was a ship because I had seen pictures of them. But this ship came in and moored up against the wall just in front of me, and a lot of people got off all looking pleased with themselves.

"Well, that's a happy looking crowd, Master. What were they doing, anyway?"

"Oh, this is Patra. Here you can have any number of things for recreation. These people, I suppose, thought how nice it would be to take a leisurely trip over to the island. I expect they had tea there and then they came back.

"This is several steps up from the astral world. People can only come here if they are, let us say, super people. It often entails terrible suffering to get worthy of this place, but when one gets here and sees what it is, and sees the caliber of the people, then it is obvious that the place is worth all the suffer-

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ing.

"Here we can travel by thought. We are on this planet and we want to see a certain person. Well, we think about him, we think about him hard, and if he is willing to see us we suddenly lift off the ground, and rise up in the air and travel swiftly to our wanted destination. We should get there and we should see the person we wanted to see standing outside his front door ready to greet us."

"But, Master, what sort of people come here, how do they get here? And would you call them prisoners? Presumably they can't get away from this place."

"Oh definitely, definitely this is not a prison. This is a place of advancement, only good people can come here. Those who have made supreme sacrifices, can come, those who have done their very best to help their fellow men and women. Normally we should go from the flesh body to the astral body. Do you see that here no one has a Silver Cord? No one has a Golden Bowl vapor around his or her head? They don't need it here because everyone is the same. We have all manner of good people here. Socrates, Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci, and others like that. Here they lose what little faults they had because to keep them on Earth they had to adopt a fault. They were of such a high vibration that they just could not stay on Earth without having some sort of fault, so before Mendelsohn, or someone else, could get down to Earth he had to have a fault inbred for that one particular life. So when he died and got to the astral world then the fault departed, and the entity departed also. I mentioned Mendelsohn, the musician; he would arrive on the astral plane and it would be like a policeman there to take away the Silver Cord and the Golden Bowl, and send him along to Patra. On Patra he would meet friends and acquaintances, and they would be able to discuss their past lives and carry out experiments which they had long wanted to do."

"Well, Master, what do they do about food here? There doesn't seem to be food, boxes of food, on this place which I assume is a dock."

"No, you won't find much food on this world. People don't need it. They pick up all their bodily and mental energy by a system of osmosis, that is, they absorb the energy given out by the light of Patra. If they want to eat for pleasure, of course, or drink for pleasure, then they are quite able to do so, except they cannot gormandise, and they cannot have those spirituous liquors which rot a person's brain. Such drinks are very, very bad, you know, and they can hold up a person's development for several lives."

"Now let's take a fleeting glance through the place. There is no time here, so it is useless for you to ask a person how long he has lived here because he

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will just look at you blankly and think you are someone not at all aware of the conditions. People never get used to Patra, they never get tired of it, there is always some- thing fresh to do, fresh people to meet, but you cannot meet an enemy.

“Let us get up in the air and look down on this little fishing village.”

“But I thought you said people did not need to eat Master, so why should they want a fishing village?”

“Well, they are not catching fish in the ordinary meaning of the word, they are catching fish to see how they can be improved to give them better senses. On Earth, you know, the fish are really stupid and they deserve to get caught, but here they are caught in nets and kept in water all the time we have them, and they are treated kindly and there is no resentment from them. They realize that we are trying to do good for the whole species. Similarly with animals, none of them are afraid of mankind on this world. They are friends instead. But let’s just take a darting visit to various places because soon we must be leaving here and going back to the Potala.”

Suddenly I felt myself rising up into the air, and my sight seemed to be going. I suddenly got a splitting headache and, to tell the honest truth about it, I thought I was dying. The Lama Mingyar Dondup grabbed me and put his hands over my eyes. He said

“I am so sorry, Lobsang, I forgot you had not been treated for fourth dimension sight. We shall have to go down on the surface again for about half an hour.” With that I felt myself sinking, and then the welcome, welcome feeling of something solid below my feet.

“This is the fourth dimension world, and sometimes there are overtones of the fifth dimension. If we are showing a person Patra then, of course, they have to have fourth dimensional vision otherwise it is too much of a strain for them.” The Lama had me lay back on a couch and then he dropped things in my eyes. After several minutes he put goggles on me, goggles which completely covered my eyes. I said, “Oh! I can see now.

This is wonderful.” Before things had been beautiful, extraordinarily beautiful, but now that I could see in the fourth dimension the sights were so glorious that they just cannot be described in three dimensional words. But I nearly wore my eyes out looking about, and then we rose up into the air again and I just had not seen such beauty before. The men were of surpassing handsomeness, but the women—well, they were so beautiful that I felt somewhat strange stirrings inside, and, of course, women and I were strangers because my mother had been a very strict mother indeed and my sister—well, I had

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hardly seen her. We were kept rigidly apart because it had been ordained before my birth that I should enter the Lamasery. But the beauty, the absolute beauty, and the tranquility, it really defies description in a three dimensional language. It is like trying to describe something on Earth by a man born blind. How is he going to describe colours? He is born blind, so what does he know about colours, what is there to describe? He can say something about the shape and about the weight, but the real beauty of the thing is absolutely beyond his comprehension. I am like that now, I have been treated to be able to see in the third dimension, the fourth dimension, and the fifth, so that when the time comes for me to leave this Earth I will go straight to Patra.

So these people who say they have a course of instruction and it is run by Dr. Rampa by Ouija Board—well, they are just crackpots. I tell you again, when I leave this world I shall be completely beyond your reach. I shall be so far away from you that you cannot even comprehend it!

It is quite impossible for me to describe Patra to you. It is like trying to tell a person who is born blind what a picture exhibition is like—you would get nowhere.

But there are other things than pictures. Certain of the great people of old were here in this world of Patra and they were working to try to help other worlds, two dimensional worlds, and three dimensional worlds.

Many of the so-called inventions on Earth are not inventions of the claimant; he or she just picked up the idea from something that he or she saw in the astral world, and he came back to Earth with a memory of something that had to be invented, he got the broad ideas of how to do it, and—well—he constructed what-ever it was that had to be constructed and then he got it patented in his own name.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup seemed to be extraordinarily well known on Patra. He could go anywhere and meet anyone, and he introduced me as an old friend that the others remembered but I had forgotten because of the cloying clay of the Earth. They laughed with me, and said, “Never mind, you will soon be coming over to us and then you will remember everything.”

The Lama Mingyar Dondup was talking to a scientist, and he was saying, “Of course the big trouble we have now is that people of different races have different outlooks. For instance, on some worlds women are treated as the equal of men, but on other worlds women are treated as common utensils or slaves, and when they get to a country which gives full freedom to women they are unnerved and absolutely lost. We are working to try to find a way whereby all men and women of all countries will have a common viewpoint. They get a

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little way toward that in the astral world, but, of course, no one can come to Patra unless he realizes to the full the rights of everyone." He looked at me and smiled, and then said, "I see you already recognize the rights of Friend Cat."

I replied, "Yes, sir, I love them. I think they are the most wonderful animals anywhere."

"You've got a marvelous reputation with animals, you know, and when you come back to us on Patra a whole horde of cats are going to be there to meet you.

You will have a living fur coat." He smiled because this big brown and white cat was climbing up my front to sit on my shoulder, and, resting his left paw on my head so as to steady himself just as a human would.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Well, Bob, we've got to say goodbye to you for the time being, but Lobsang will soon be returning Home and then you will have ample opportunity to sit on his shoulder." Bob, the cat, nodded solemnly and jumped off onto a table, and he rubbed against me and purred and purred and purred.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup said, "Let's move to the other side of Patra. There is the kingdom of flowers and plants, and the trees especially are waiting to see you again." No sooner had he finished speaking than we arrived at this wonderful spot where there were incredibly beautiful flowers and trees. I was scared stiff to move for fear of treading on the flowers. The Lama looked at me and fully understood my predicament. He said, "Oh, I am so sorry, Lobsang, I should have told you. Here in the kingdom of flowers you have to lift yourself about a foot above the actual ground. It is one of the abilities of the fourth dimension. You think the ground is a foot higher, and so as you walk thinking the ground is a foot higher then you actually walk a foot above the soil in which these plants live. We won't risk anything now. Instead we will just take a look around some other parts of this world. The machine men, for instance." Machines with souls, flowers wit souls, cats with souls. "I suppose we'd better be getting back, Lobsang," he said then, "because I have to show you a few things to prepare you in part for the life you are going to have to live. I wish I could travel with you and help you more, but my Kharma is that I am going to be killed by Communists who are going to stab me through the back. But, never mind that, let's go back to our own world."

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CHAPTER NINE

We left what was called the 'Four Dimension Room' and crossed the huge hall to the one which was marked 'This World.' The walk was about a quarter of a mile, so our feet were quite aching by the time we got to 'This World.'

The Lama Mingyar Dondup entered and sat on the bench next to the console. I followed him and sat down on the bench beside him. The Lama touched a button and the light in the room disappeared. Instead we could see our world in the dim, dim lighting. I looked away wondering what had happened, where was the light?

And then I looked at the globe of the world—and promptly fell backwards over the bench, hitting my head on the hard floor. As I had looked into the world I saw a hideous dinosaur with jaws agape, and it was looking straight at me from a distance of about six feet. I rather sheepishly picked myself up, ashamed that I had been frightened by a creature which had been dead thousands of years.

The Lama said, "We have to skim through some of the history because there is so much in the history books which is absolutely incorrect. Look!" On the world I saw a range of mountains, and at the foot of one of the mountains there was a great horde of soldiers and their camp followers which included many women.

In those days, it seems, the soldiery could not do without the consolation of women's bodies, so the women went to war with them so they could satisfy the men after a victory. And if there was no victory the women were captured by the enemy and used for precisely the same purpose as they would have been used if their side had been victorious.

There was a very busy scene. Men were milling around quite a collection of elephants, and one man was standing on the broad back of an elephant

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arguing with the crowd below. "I tell you, these elephants will not cross the mountains where there is snow. They are used to heat, they cannot survive in the cold weather."

In addition, how are we going to get the tons and tons of food which these elephants would need? I suggest that we unload the elephants and put the loads on horses native to the area. "That is the only way we shall get across."

Well, the commotion went on, they were like a lot of old fishwives, arguing and waving their arms, but the elephant-man had his way, the elephants were unloaded and all the horses in the district were rounded up in spite of the protests of the farmers to whom they belonged.

Of course I did not understand a word of the speech, but this particular instrument which the Lama had just put on my head put all the knowledge of what was being said into my head instead of going by way of my ears. So I was able to follow everything in the most minute detail.

At last the immense cavalcade was ready, and the women were also put on horses. It is not generally realized that women are really much stronger physically than men. I supposed that they pretended to be weak because in that way men carried the loads and the women rode on ponies.

The cavalcade started off, up the mountain path, and as we progressed upwards we could see that there would have been no hope at all of getting the elephants up the narrow rocky path, and when we did encounter snow the horses did not think much of it, either, and they really had to be driven.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup skipped a few centuries, and then when he stopped the spinning we saw there was a battle going on. We did not know where it was but they seemed to be pretty bloody. It was not enough to stick a sword into a person, the victor used to cut off the head of the victim and the heads were all tossed in a great pile. We watched for a bit to see all these men killing each other, and there were flying pennants and hoarse cries, and at the sides of the battlefield the women watched from roughly made tents. It did not matter much to them which side won because they would be used for the same purpose. But they watched, I suppose, out of more or less idle curiosity the same as we were watching.

A touch of the knob, and the world spun faster. The Lama stopped it every so often, and it seemed utterly incredible to me that each time he stopped there seemed to be a war in progress. We moved on until we came to the time of the Crusaders, which the Lama had told me about. It was 'the thing' in those days for men of title to go abroad and make war against the Saracens. The Saracens were a gentle, cultured race, but they were still quite prepared to

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defend their homeland, and many an English title ended on the battlefield.

At last we saw the Boer War in progress.. Both sides were utterly convinced of the justice of their case, and the Boers seemed to have a particular target, not the heart, not the stomach, but lower so that if a man was wounded and if he was able to get home somehow, he would certainly be of no use to his wife. All this was explained to me in a whisper.

Then, all of a sudden, the battle ended. It seemed that both sides were either the winners or the losers because they intermingled and then, at last, the invaders—the Crusaders—moved to one side of the battlefield while the Saracens moved to the opposite side where they, too, had women waiting for them.

The wounded and the dying were left where they had fallen, there was nothing else that could be done. There was no medical service, so if a man was badly wounded he often asked his friends to put him out of his misery, and how they did that was to put a dagger in the man's hand and then move away. If the man really wanted to end his life he merely had to push the dagger into his heart.

The world spun on, and then there came a ferocious war which seemed to engulf most of the world. There were people of all colours fighting and using weapons, great guns on wheels, and in the air at the end of ropes there were things which I now know were called balloons. They were up high so that a man in a basket attached to the balloon could peer over the enemies' lines and try to figure out how they would attack or how they should be attacked. Then we saw some noisy machines come flying through the air, and they shot at the balloons and brought them down in flames.

The ground was an absolute morass of mud and blood, there were bits of humans all over the place. There were dead bodies suspended from barbed wire, and every so often there came a crump, crump, and great lumps would come flying through the air which when they hit the ground, exploded with quite disastrous results to the countryside as well as to the enemy.

A touch of a button and the picture shifted. We were looking at the sea, and we could see dots so far away that they indeed looked like dots, but the Lama Mingyar Dondup brought them into closer focus and then we saw that they were huge metal vessels with long metal tubes which moved to and fro, and spewed out great missiles. The missiles traveled twenty miles or more before falling on an enemy ship. We saw one battleship, it must have been hit in the armament section, because we saw the missile land on the deck and then it was as if the world exploded, the vessel heaved and burst into thou-

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sands of parts. There were flying bits of metal all over the place, and flying bits of humans, and with all that blood coming down it seemed as if a red fog was settling over the place.

At last some sort of arrangement seemed to come into force because the soldiers stopped shooting at each other. We, from our vantage point, saw one man sur-repetitiously raise his weapon and shoot his commanding officer!

The Lama Mingyar Dondup quickly pressed a few buttons and we were back in the area of the Trojan Wars. I whispered, "Master, aren't we jumping from date to date without any regard for the sequence?"

"Oh, but I am showing you all this for a special reason, Lobsang. Look," he pointed. A Trojan soldier suddenly brought his spear to the level and it went straight through the heart of his commanding officer.

"I was just showing you that human nature doesn't change. It goes on and on like this. You get a man, he will shoot his commanding officer, and then perhaps in another reincarnation he comes and does precisely the same thing again. I am trying to teach you certain things, Lobsang, not to teach you history as from a book because those history books are far too often altered to suit the political leaders of the time."

We sat there on our bench, and the Lama tuned us in to many different scenes. Sometimes there would be six hundred years between scenes. That certainly gave one an opportunity to judge what the politicos were really doing. We saw empires rise by arrant treachery, and we saw empires fall, again by arrant treachery.

The Lama suddenly said, "Now, Lobsang, here we will have a glimpse into the future." The globe darkened, lightened, and darkened again, and we saw strange sights. We saw a great liner as big as a city. It was steaming along like a queen of the seas, and all of a sudden there was a heartbreaking screech as the ship was sliced open below the waterline by a projection from a mighty iceberg.

The ship started to settle. There was a certain amount of panic, a lot of people got in lifeboats, others fell into the sea as the ship listed, and on one deck the band played to avert panic, the band played on until the ship went down with a frightening gurgle. Great bubbles of air came up, and great gouts of oil. Then gradually odd items came up as well, the dead body of a child, a woman's handbag which somehow floated to the surface. "This, Lobsang, is another item which is out of its chronological order. This should have come before the war you have just recently seen. But, never mind, you can flip through a picture book and perhaps get as much knowledge as if you read everything

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in that book in the right order. I am trying to get certain things into your head."

The dawn broke. The early morning sunlight glinted redly on the tips of the icebergs, and spread downwards as the sun rose higher. As it spread downwards it lost its red colour and became the ordinary, normal light of day.

The sea was littered with an absolutely incredible collection of items. Broken chairs and various parcels, and, of course, inevitably the dead bodies, white and waxy. There were men, or what had been men, in evening dress. There were women, or what had been women, also in evening dress, but which could better be described as evening undress.

We looked and we looked, and there were no rescue ships in sight, and as the Lama said, "Well, Lobsang, we will move on to something else, there is no point in us loitering here when there is not a thing that we can do." He put out his hand to the buttons and to the knob which was on the end of a little rod, and the globe spun faster. Daylight—darkness—darkness—daylight, and so on, and then we stopped. We were in a place called England, and my Guide translated some of the names for me. Piccadilly, Statue of Eros, and all sorts of things like that, and then he stopped right in front of a newspaper seller—of course we were quite invisible to the man because we were in a different time zone. What we were seeing now was what was yet to happen, we were glimpsing into the future. We were at the beginning of a century, but we were seeing something either 1939 or 1940, I could not quite make out the figures, not that it matters. But there were great placards about. The Lama read them out to me. They were about someone called Neville Chamberlain going to Berlin with his umbrella. And then we slipped into what the Lama called a news theatre. On a screen we saw grim faced men in steel helmets and accoutered with all the instruments of war. They were marching in a most peculiar way, 'The Goose Step,' said the Lama, 'practiced a lot by the German army.' And then the picture changed to show starving people in another part of the world, people who just dropped dead of hunger and cold.

We moved out into the street, and skipped a few days. And then the Lama stopped the spinning for us to catch our breath, etc., because skimming around the world through various eras of time was indeed quite a disturbing and exhausting experience, especially for me, a boy who had never been out of his own country, who had never seen things with wheels before. Yes, it was quite a disturbing thing.

I turned to the Lama Mingyar Dondup, and said, "Master, this matter of Patra; I have never heard of the place before, I have never heard any of the teachers mention Patra. They teach us that when we leave this Earth through the period of transition we go to the astral world, and there we live until the

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urge comes to us to go back to Earth in a different body or go to some other world in a different body. But nobody has said anything about Patra, and I am really confused."

"My dear Lobsang, there are many things of which you have not yet heard, but will. Patra is a world. It is a far superior world to this one and to the astral world. It is a world to which people go when they have some very special virtues, or when they have done a very great deal of good for others. It is not mentioned because it would be too discouraging. Many are chosen as possible material for Patra and then at the last moment the person shows some weakness or some wrongness of thought and so he loses his chance of going to Patra.

"You and I, Lobsang, are quite definitely assured of going to Patra as soon as we leave this world, but that is not the end of it because we shall live in Patra for a time and then we shall go to an even higher place. On Patra you see people who have devoted their time to research for the good of Man and Animals, not for Man alone, mind, but for the animal world as well. Animals have souls, and they progress or fail to progress just the same as humans do. Humans too often think that they are the Lords of Creation, and that an animal is just there for the use of Man. They could not be more mistaken!"

"Well, Master, you were showing me what war was like, a war that had lasted for years. Now I would like to see what happened, how it ended, etc."

"All right, then," said the Lama, "we will go to the time just before the ending of the war." He turned away from me and looked up some book with dates in it, and then he set the controls on the console and the simulacrum of our world came to life again, came to life with plenty of light.

We saw a shattered countryside, and with rails upon which they ran certain machines which carried goods or passengers. On this particular occasion there were what appeared to be some very ornate boxes on wheels.

There were glass sides, and armed guards in great numbers patrolled all around. Then we saw servants putting out white cloths and covering tables, and dust covers were taken off various articles of furniture.

Then there came a lull. I took the opportunity to pay a visit to see that my own 'nature' was in working order, and when I returned—oh, a couple of minutes later—I saw what seemed to be a vast number of people, I thought they were in fancy dress, but then I realized that these were head soldiers and head sailors. It seemed to be representatives from all the countries at war. One set of people did not associate with the other set of people. At last they were all arranged, and sitting at tables in that boxlike thing which was some sort of

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vehicle.

I looked at them, and, of course, I had never seen anything like this before because all the leading men their necks, also with medals attached, and I immediately recognized that these were the high members of a government trying to impress the other side by the weight of metal on their chests and the number of ribbons around their necks. It really astonished me how they could hear each other speak because of the jingle-jangle of this metal-wear on their chests. There was much waving of hands, and messengers were kept busy taking notes from one man to another, or even to another part of the vehicles. Of course, I had never seen a train before, and such a lot of it meant little to me at the time. Eventually they produced a document and it was passed from person to person, each who signed his name, and it really was most amazing the different types of signature, the different types of writing, and it appeared perfectly obvious to me that in all truth one side was no better than the other!

"That, Lobsang, has yet to come. This terrible war had been going on for several years, and they have now proposed and declared an armistice under which each side returns to their own country and tries to build up their shattered economy."

I looked, and I stared because there was no rejoicing here, everyone was grim-faced, and the looks were not of joy that the battle had ended, the looks were of hatred, deadly hatred which I could see from one side the thoughts were, "All right, you win this round, we'll get you next time."

The Lama Mingyar Dondup kept on to the same time. We saw soldiers and sailors and airmen still fighting until a certain hour of a certain day came round.

They were still at war until that day and eleven o'clock appeared with, of course, the loss of countless lives. We saw a peaceful plane with red, white, and blue circles on it flying back to its base. It was five minutes past eleven, and then from the clouds there appeared a fighter plane, an evil looking thing it was, too. It roared down out of the clouds and got right behind the red, white, and blue plane, and then the pilot pressed a button in front of him and a stream of something came out of weapons and set the red, white, and blue plane on fire. It nosed downwards in flames, and then there was one final splash and bang, and that murder was committed. It was murder because the war had ended.

We saw great vessels upon the seas loaded with troops returning to their own countries. They were absolutely loaded, so many that some of the men had to sleep on deck, some had to sleep in the lifeboats, but the ships were all

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going toward a very large country whose policies I could not understand because in the first case they were selling weapons to both sides, and then, when eventually they joined in the war well, they were fighting against their own weapons. I thought that this surely must be the depths of insanity.

As the great ships reached the harbor the whole place seemed to go wild with excitement. Skeins of paper were flung about as streamers, cars were hooting, the ships were hooting as well, and everywhere there were bands playing, no matter that some were playing one piece of music and another lot was playing another piece of music. The uproar was indescribable.

Later we saw what appeared to be one of the leaders of the victorious forces driving down a vast street with huge buildings on each side, and from all the floors of the buildings there came pelting paper confetti, paper ribbons, and all that type of thing. Various people were blowing hard on some sort of instrument which certainly could not be called a musical instrument. It seemed that there was a great celebration because now much profit would be made from the sale of ex-Government weapons to other countries, smaller countries, who wanted to have a go at war with some neighbor.

It was a dismal scene indeed which appeared on this world. The soldiers, the sailors, and the airmen had returned to their homeland, victorious, they thought, but now—well, what were they going to do for a living?

There were millions of people out of work. There was no money, and many of them had to queue up and go to what they called a 'soup kitchen' once a day. There they got some awful muck in a can which they then took home to share with their families.

The outlook was grim indeed. In one country ragged wretches could continue no longer, they were walking along on the sidewalks, peering at the space where the sidewalk became the pavement, the roadway, they were looking for a crust or anything, a cigarette butt, anything at all. And then they would stop and lean against perhaps one of the posts which carried wires, notices or lights, and then they would slump to the ground and roll into the gutter—dead, dead of starvation, dead through loss of hope. Instead of sorrow from onlookers there was gladness, some more people had died, surely soon there would be enough jobs. But no, these 'soup kitchens' grew in number, and various uniformed people went about picking up the dead and putting them on a wagon to be taken away to be—I supposed—buried or burnt.

We watched various items spread out over the years, and then in one country we saw they were preparing for war again, the country which lost last time. There were great preparations, youth movements, and all the rest of it.

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They got flying training by making quite a number of small aircraft and claiming that these were recreational things.

We saw a very funny little man with a small moustache and pale, bulging eyes. Whenever he appeared and started ranting then a crowd quickly collected. Things like this were going on all over the world, and in many cases countries went to war. Eventually there was a very big war in which most of the world was involved.

"Master," I said, "I cannot understand how you can conjure up pictures of things which have not yet occurred."

The Lama looked at me and then he looked at the machine standing ready to show us more pictures.

"Well, Lobsang, actually there is nothing very difficult in it, because if you get a gang of people you can just about bet all you have that when they do things they will all do it in the same way. If a woman is being pursued by a man she will run in one direction and hide. I vow if that occurs a second and a third time her path is established, and you are very sure then when you predict that there will be a fourth occasion and the woman will run to her secret hiding place, and that her tormentor will soon be caught."

"But, sir," I said, "how is it possible to produce pictures of a thing that hasn't happened?"

"Unfortunately, Lobsang, you are not old enough yet to be able to appreciate an explanation, but briefly, corresponding things happen in the fourth dimension and we get what is more or less an echo down here on the third dimension. Some people have the ability to see far ahead, and to know exactly what is happening."

I am one of those called a very sensitive clairvoyant and telepath, but you are going to surpass me many, many times because you have been trained like this almost before you were born. You have thought that your family have been hard on you. Yes, they have, very hard, but this was an order from the Gods. You have a special task to do, and you had to be taught anything which could be useful to you. When you are older you will understand about time tracks and different dimensions, and all that sort of thing. I told you yesterday about crossing an imaginary line on the Earth, and finding that you were in a different day. That, of course, is an entirely artificial affair so that the countries of the world can trade, and so they have this artificial system where time is artificially varied.

"Lobsang, there is a point which you apparently have not noticed. The

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things we are seeing now, and discussing now, are things that will not happen until fifty years or so have passed."

"I was almost stunned when you told me that, Master, because at the time it seemed all natural, but—yes—I can see now that some of the things—well, we don't have the science to do them. Therefore it must be something in the future."

The Lama nodded his head gravely and said, "Yes, in 1930 or 1940, or somewhere in between there, the second World War will begin. And war will rage almost throughout the whole of the globe. It will bring absolute ruin to some countries, and the ones who win the war will lose the peace, and those who lose the war will win the peace. I cannot tell you when the war will actually start because there is no point in knowing, anyhow, we cannot do anything about it. But it should be round about 1939, and that is a good few years ahead yet.

"After that war—the second Great War—there will be continuous guerrilla warfare, continuous strikes, and all the time the Unions will be trying to increase their power and gain control of their countries.

"I am sorry to tell you that in about 1985 some strange event will occur which will set the scene for the third Great World War. That war will be between peoples of all nationalities and all colours, and it will bring the Race of Tan into being. Rapes are terrible things, no doubt, but at least if a black man rapes a white woman then we have yet another colour tan, the Race of Tan. We have to have a uniform colour on this Earth. That is one of the very necessary things before there can be much lasting peace.

"We cannot give exact dates, exact to the day, the hour, the minute and the second as some idiots think we can, but we can say that round about the year 2000 there will be intense activity in the Universe, and intense activity on this world. After a bitter, bitter struggle the war will be resolved with help from people from outer space, people who do not like Communism here.

"But now is the time to see if my legs are good enough to walk on and get down the mountainside, because then we must return to the Potala."

We looked at all the machines we had used, we made sure they were clean and left in the best condition that we could manage. We made sure that all the switches were working properly, and then the Lama Mingyar Dondup and I put on new robes, 'new' robes, a million or more years old and of wonderful material. We must have looked like two old washerwomen if anybody could have seen us poring over the clothes to find something which especially appealed to that amount of vanity which we still had within us. At last we were

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satisfied. I was a monk, and Mingyar Dondup was done up with a robe of very high status indeed, and I knew he was entitled to an even higher one.

We found big robes which would fit over our new equipment, and so we put them on to save our clothes when going down the mountainside.

We had a meal and a drink, and we each said goodbye to that little room with the hole in the corner. Then we set out.

"Master!" I exclaimed, "How are we going to hide the entrance?"

"Lobsang, never doubt the Powers that Be. It is already arranged that when we leave this place a curtain of solid stone, many feet thick, will slip down and cover the entrance, and destroy any evidence of it from out side. So when we get out we must hold our hands and rush, we must go as fast as we can together to get out before the big rock falls in place and seals away these secrets to prevent the Chinese finding them, because, as I told you, the Chinese will take over this country and Tibet will be no more. Instead there will be a secret Tibet with the wisest of Wise Men living in caves and tunnels like this, and these men will teach the men and women of a new generation which will follow much later on, and which will bring peace to this Earth."

We traversed the path, and then we saw a square of daylight. We hurried along as fast as we could, and shot out into the open air. I looked with love down at the Potala, and down at Chakpori, and then I looked at the steep way ahead of us and I really wondered how we would manage.

At that moment there was a tremendous commotion, as if the world was coming to an end. The rock door had fallen, and we could hardly believe our eyes. There was no trace of an opening, no trace of a path. It was as though this adventure had never been.

So we made our way down the mountainside, and I looked at my Guide, and I thought of him going to die at the treacherous hands of Communists. And I thought of my own death which would occur in a foreign country. But then the Lama Mingyar Dondup and I would be united in Sacred Patra.

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EPILOGUE

And so yet another true story has come to an end. Now there is nothing except to wait in my hospital bed until my Silver Cord be severed and my Golden Bowl be shattered, so that I can go to my Spiritual Home—Patra.

There is so much I could have done. I would have liked, for instance, to have spoken in the League of Nations, or whatever they call themselves nowadays, on behalf of Tibet. But there was too much jealousy, too much spite, and the Dalai Lama was in a difficult position taking aid from people, so that, of course, he could not go against their wishes.

I could have written more about Tibet, but here again there was jealousy and fake articles, and the press have always sought for anything gruesomely horrifying or what they call “wicked” and which they do every day.

Transmigration is true. It is an actual fact of life, and it used to be a great science indeed. It is like a man travelling by air to his destination and then finding a car waiting for him as he steps out of the plane, only in this a Great Spirit takes over a body that he may do a task allotted to him.

These books, my books, are true, absolutely true, and if you think that this particular book smacks of science fiction you are wrong. The science in it could have been many times increased had the scientists been at all interested, but the fiction—there just isn’t any, not even “artists’ license.”

So I lay back in my old hospital bed waiting release from the long night of horror which is “life” on Earth. My cats have been a relief and a joy, and I love them more than I love a human.

Just a final word. Some people have tried to “cash in” on me already. Some people spread about the story that I was dead, and that from the “Other Side” I had commanded them to start a correspondence course, that I (from the “Other Side”) would be the head of it and we would correspond with the Ouija Board. Now, the Ouija Board is absolute fakery, and worse, because in some cases, it can allow evil or mischievous entities to take possession of the person using the Ouija Board. May the Good Spirits preserve you.

THE END

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